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How to create beautiful

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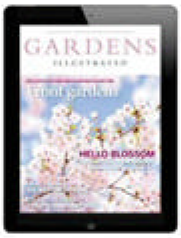
editor's letter

I've never thought of myself as someone who's attracted to anything pink and fluffy, but have to admit to a weakness for cherry blossom. The first hint of buds on the tree at the end of my garden always makes my heart miss a beat and I often think of how years ago a friend piled his car windscreen with armfuls of petals just so that our children could watch in amazement as the windscreen wipers gently batted away great puffs of pink. I love the idea of celebrating the transient beauty of cherry blossom each year as the Japanese do, and to inspire us all to plant the prettiest cultivars, we look at some of the best (in pink, white and cream) in our Plant Profile on page 58. You can find further planting inspiration in the Dorset garden of architect Ben Pentreath, a formal Hertfordshire garden designed by Julie Toll and an exuberant cottage garden in the Netherlands. I've always found it puzzling that we come across so few interesting front gardens – especially considering how visible they often are – so I'm delighted to offer readers three clever planting and design plans created exclusively for us by designer Anoushka Feiler. In addition, nurseryman Hans Kramer offers advice on some of the loveliest plants for spring, celebrated garden designer Arabella Lennox-Boyd shares insights into her favourite tulip combinations and Annie Guilfoyle discusses how to create cohesion in the garden in the concluding part of her Design Ideas series. Looking through the issue I realise that for some strange reason there's quite a preponderance of pink; maybe it's time to reassess my taste. I hope you enjoy the issue.

Juliet



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This pink and fluffy *Pulsatilla vulgaris* subsp. *grandis* 'Papageno' is one of Hans Kramer's April picks, page 26.

These pretty *Tulipa* 'Shirley' in the borders at Great Dixter are a good example of cohesive planting, page 86.

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Plantsman and head gardener at Great Dixter in East Sussex.

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DAN PEARSON
Garden designer, plantsman and columnist.

MAAYKE DE RIDDER, CAROL CASSELDEN / GAP PHOTOS

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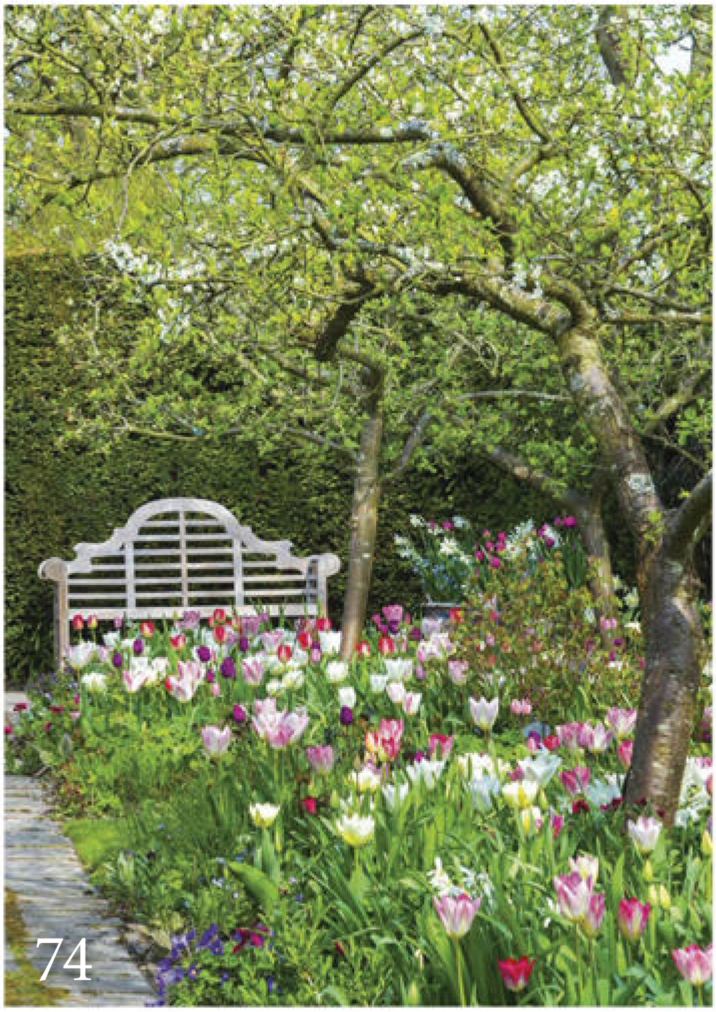

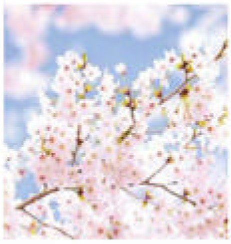

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Prunus x yedoensis
Photography by
Aflo Co Ltd/Alamy

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MARIANNE MAJERUS, JASON INGRAM

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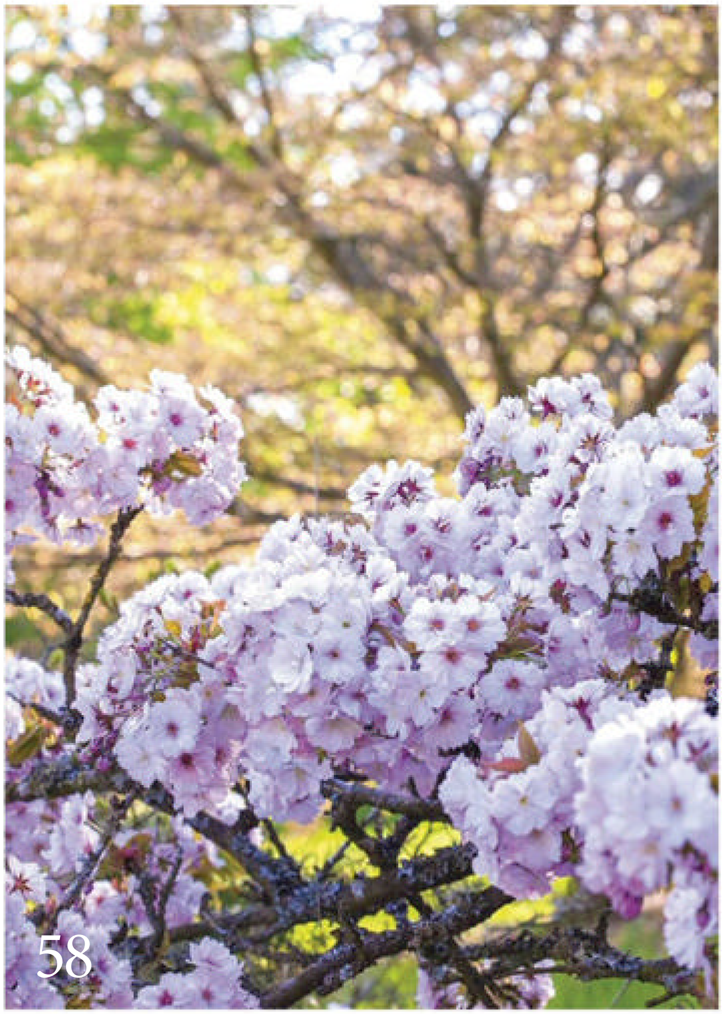

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LYNN KEDDIE, MARIANNE MAJERUS

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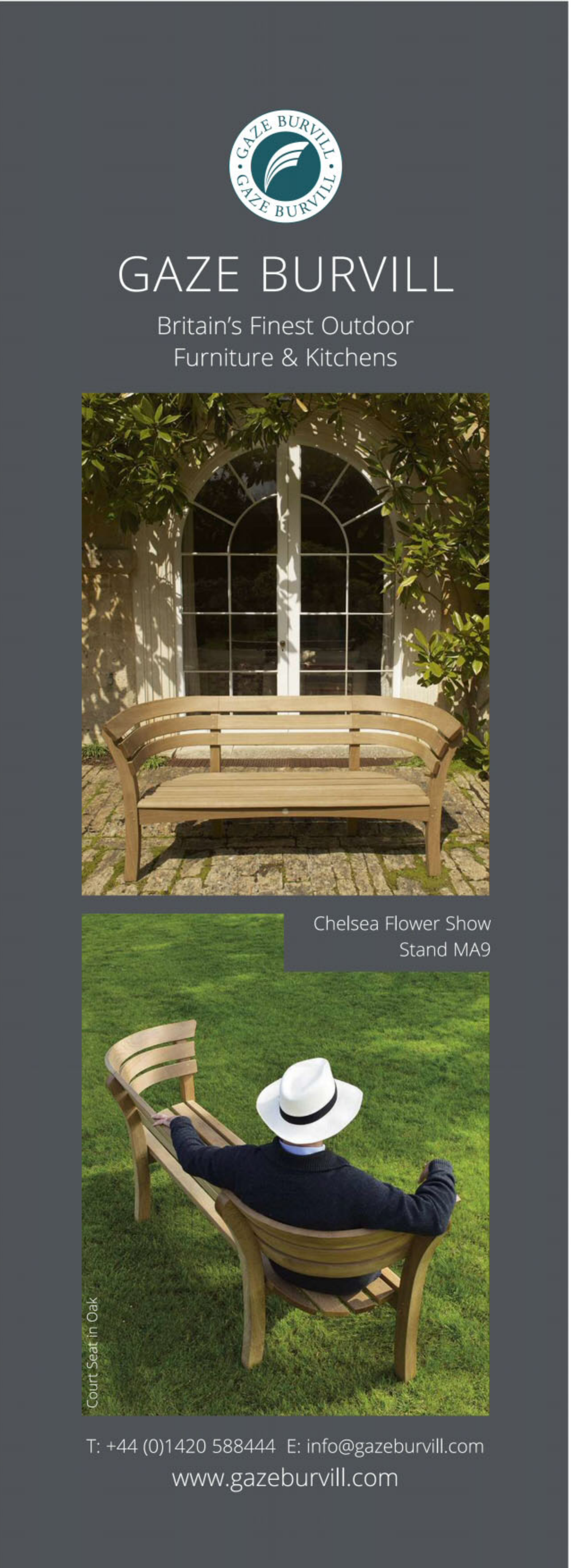
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ANNIE GUILFOYLE

Annie runs a busy garden design consultancy in West Sussex and combines this with lecturing and writing on the subject, which makes for a very full life. On page 86 she concludes her Design Ideas series with advice on how to create cohesion in the garden.

"What makes a good garden? Keep it simple, do thorough plant research, be bold and make sure you have lots of fun."

CHARLIE HOPKINSON

ARABELLA LENNOX-BOYD

Arabella has created more than 400 gardens around the world from her London office. Born in Rome, she was inspired by the wild flowers that grow on its surrounding hills. On page 68 she shares her secrets to successfully combining tulips.

"Tulips are both an extravagance and a staple of the garden in spring, a chance to experiment with colour each year."

ALLAN POLLOK-MORRIS

Allan is a Cotswold-based photographer whose garden images feature in numerous magazines. As a Scotsman, the call of the north is always strong, and on page 68 he travels to Lancashire to photograph Arabella Lennox-Boyd's tulips.

"I cannot imagine a better start to the garden season than a visit to Arabella's exquisite garden at Gresgarth in Lancashire."

ANOUSHKA FEILER

Anoushka set up her landscape and garden design practice, Bestique, in 2009. She is known for her avant-garde style and for creating entertaining garden experiences. On page 52 she tackles the question of how to create kerb appeal with your front garden.

"Much time and money is spent on a home but the front garden is often last on the list, yet it's the first impression visitors have."

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2nd Floor, Tower House, Fairfax Street, Bristol BS1 3BN.

SYNDICATION & LICENSING

Gardens Illustrated is available for licensing and syndication.

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THIS MAGAZINE IS OWNED AND PUBLISHED BY IMMEDIATE MEDIA COMPANY BRISTOL

Standard subscription rates: UK £58.50 per annum; Eire and Europe £54.10 for 13 issues; rest of the world £64.95 for 13 issues. Distribution Frontline, Peterborough. US distribution Source IPD/Speedimpex. Email intlquery@seymour.co.uk Printed in the UK by William Gibbons Ltd. *Gardens Illustrated* (ISSN 0968-8920) (USPS 015-608) is published 13 times a year (monthly with an Special issue in December) by Immediate Media Company Bristol, 2nd Floor, Tower House, Fairfax St, Bristol BS1 3BN, UK. Distributed in the US by Circulation Specialists, LLC, 2 Corporate Drive, Ste. 945, Shelton, CT 06484. Periodical postage paid at Shelton, CT and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Gardens Illustrated* , PO Box 37495, Boone, IA 50037-0495.Unsolicited manuscripts, artwork or transparencies are accepted on the understanding that the publishers incur no liability for their storage or return. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and may not be reproduced without permission. The *Gardens Illustrated* cover is printed on 250gsm Respecta Gloss produced in Belgium by Burgo; the china clay filler is supplied from the UK. The Immediate Media Company Limited is working to ensure that all of its paper is sourced from well-managed forests. This magazine can be recycled for use in newspapers and packaging. Please remove any gifts, samples or wrapping and dispose of it at your local collection point. All prices are correct at time of going to press. © Immediate Media Company Bristol Limited 2015. Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulation. ISSN 0968-8920.

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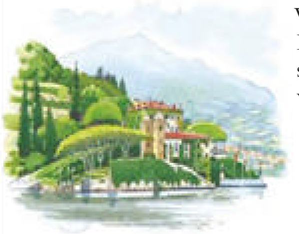
We also arrange tailor-made short break holidays to classic cities and relaxing countryside destinations throughout Europe and beyond, including regions renowned for their gardens such as Madeira, Tivoli and the Côte d'Azur. The Kirker Concierge is on hand to help arrange garden visits with an expert local guide as well as to book opera, concert or gallery tickets and reserve a table at a recommended restaurant.

THE ITALIAN LAKES – GARDENS & VILLAS OF COMO & MAGGIORE

A SIX NIGHT HOLIDAY | 24 JUNE 2015

One has to go far to find a more perfect and peaceful landscape than the shores of Lake Como. Tranquil, serene and timeless, the mountains that fringe the crystal waters provide a dramatic backdrop as do the countless pristine villas that stretch up the hillsides from the lake shores. A visit to the shores of Lake Maggiore, quite different in atmosphere from Lake Como, completes this discovery of one of the most beautiful regions of Italy.

Based in the lakeside town of Como, this tour explores the gardens and villas that line the shores of these two beautiful, yet contrasting, lakes as well as two villas in the Lombardy countryside. On Lake Como we visit Bellagio, an idyllic resort, the gardens at the Villa Carlotta and the Villa Balbianello and have lunch at the luxurious Villa D'Este. We visit two tiny islands in Lake Maggiore and a 15th Century villa still owned by members of the same family who built it.



Price from £1,798 for six nights including return flights, accommodation with breakfast, three dinners, three lunches, all sightseeing, entrance fees and gratuities and the services of the Kirker Tour Lecturer.

THE LIGURIAN RIVIERA

A SEVEN NIGHT HOLIDAY | 3 MAY 2015

The palm trees, pastel-coloured villas and beautiful gardens of this stretch of coastline make the Ligurian Riviera one of the most exotic and opulent in the entire Mediterranean.

Liguria is one of the most exotic and opulent stretches of coastline in the entire Mediterranean – palm trees, pastel-coloured villas, gardens and unspoilt seaside villages all combine to make it the very essence of Italy. We will visit Genoa, once a great maritime centre ruled by powerful Doges, and explore the area known as le Cinqueterre. There will also be time to relax and enjoy the delightful resort of Santa Margherita overlooking the Gulf of Tigullio, where we stay at the charming 4★ Deluxe Grand Hotel Miramare.

Price from £2,496 for seven nights including return flights, accommodation with breakfast, five dinners, two lunches, all sightseeing, entrance fees and gratuities and the services of the Kirker Tour Lecturer.

HOUSES, GARDENS & GALLERIES OF SUSSEX

A FOUR NIGHT HOLIDAY | 15 JUNE 2015

Our new tour explores a selection of the county's great houses, gardens and galleries from our base in the historic village of Alfriston.

During the holiday we visit two superb Elizabethan houses, Glynde Place and Firle Place, the seat of Lord Gage, a lovely 18th Century house at the foot of the South Downs near Lewes. We go to two galleries with important collections of first rate 20th and 21st Century British art – the Jerwood Gallery, in the lovely old town of Hastings, and Pallant House Gallery in Chichester. A highlight of this tour is a visit to the garden at Great Dixter which was designed by Lutyens and made internationally famous by Christopher Lloyd. It is now under the stewardship of Fergus Garrett and continues to inspire expert and novice gardeners alike.

Price from £790 for four nights including accommodation with breakfast, all dinners, all sightseeing, entrance fees and gratuities and the services of the Kirker Tour Leader.

HOUSES OF NORFOLK

A FOUR NIGHT HOLIDAY | 4 JUNE 2015

With its vast area of empty marshes, the North Norfolk coastline is one of the least spoilt in the country. Inland, the visitor can find some of the grandest houses in England and a number of very fine gardens.

This tour will be based at the 4★ Victoria Hotel in Holkham, which is a gateway to the Holkham estate and overlooks Lady Anne's Drive. We will drive along the glorious vistas of the north Norfolk coastline visiting some of the many splendid churches in the area. We visit Raynham Hall, the seat of the Marquess Townshend, Holkham Hall, where we see the restoration project in the Walled Garden, Houghton Hall, where white deer run wild in its extensive parkland and Sandringham, the Norfolk seat of Her Majesty the Queen.

Price from £1,389 for four nights including accommodation with breakfast, all dinners, one lunch, a concert recital at Holkham all sightseeing, entrance fees and gratuities and the services of the Kirker Tour Lecturer.

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Exclusive Reader Events 2015

Gardens Illustrated Festival
17-18 April 2015 – see below

Gardens Illustrated Talk
19 May 2015 – page 10

Umbellifers Event
1 June 2015 – page 12

Devon Holiday
28 June-1 July– page 14

GARDENS ILLUSTRATED Festival

17-18 April 2015, Malmesbury, Wiltshire

Join these inspirational experts for our celebration of gardens, gardening, plants and design. You will also find a selection of carefully chosen exhibitors selling fine plants and beautiful garden products, plus a Design and Plant Clinic to help solve your horticultural queries.

FRIDAY 17 APRIL Tickets £25

Troy Scott Smith, Dan Pearson and Chris Marchant
The Authentic Sissinghurst – recapturing the distinctive qualities of Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson's garden
7.30-8.30pm held in Malmesbury Abbey

SATURDAY 18 APRIL Tickets £13.50 for each talk

IN MALMESBURY ABBEY

Fergus Garrett
Designing with Plants at Great Dixter
10-11am

Tom Stuart-Smith
The Language of Place – Gardens and Culture
12-1pm

Sarah Raven
The Home Cutting Garden
2-3pm

Anna Pavord
The Flowering of Tuscany
4-5pm

IN THE WESLEYAN ROOM

Alys Fowler
Letters to a Bee Keeper
10-11am

Sarah Price
Planting Styles: A Review of Sarah's Work
12-1pm

James Alexander-Sinclair
Dancing in Borders
2-3pm

Rachel Dein
The Ultimate in Pressed Flowers
4-5pm

Tom Mitchell
The Modern Day Plant Hunter
5.30-6.30pm

IN THE ASSEMBLY HALL

Derry Watkins
New Plants – Choosing and Using
10-11am

Annie Guilfoyle
A Creative Approach to Small Gardens
12-1pm

Jason Ingram
Gardens Through the Lens
2-3pm

Noël Kingsbury
Travels with NK
4-5pm

Frank Ronan
The Invisible Garden
5.30-6.30pm

To book visit our website or call the telephone number below

gardensfestival.com 0871 230 7156*

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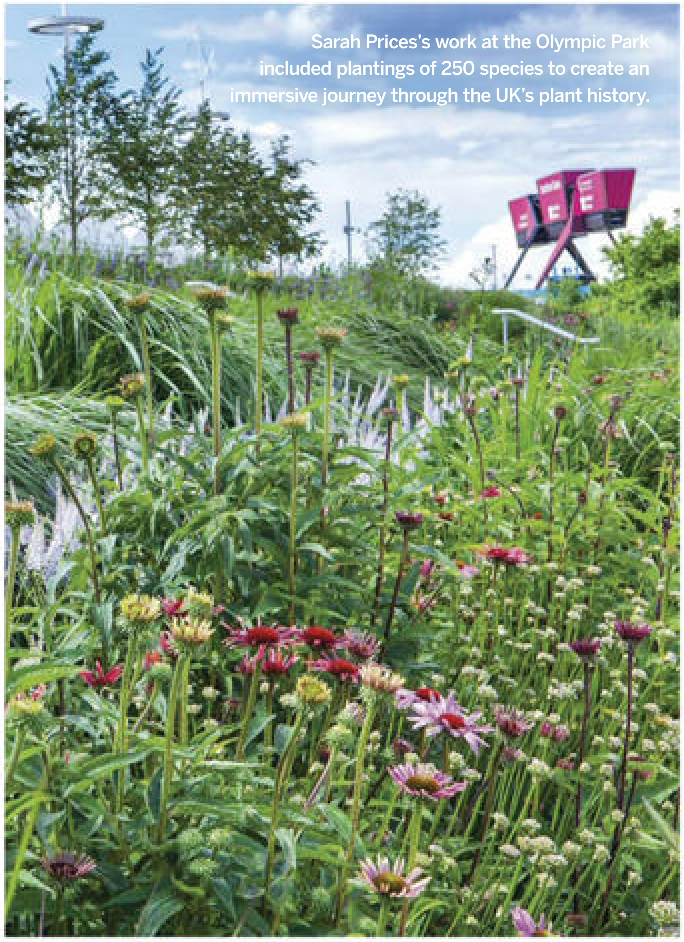
Key to Penelope Hobhouse's garden design is a strong formal framework paired with exuberant planting – as here at her new garden in Somerset.



Sarah Prices's work at the Olympic Park included plantings of 250 species to create an immersive journey through the UK's plant history.

Jinny Blom's carefully considered design ensures this Chilterns garden sits comfortably in its surrounding landscape.

JASON INGRAM, MARIANNE MAJERUS

Gardens Illustrated Talk

With Penelope Hobhouse, Jinny Blom and Sarah Price

Join us on **Tuesday 19 May** at the Royal Geographical Society in London, with three generations of garden designers

We are delighted to once again be hosting the *Gardens Illustrated* Talk. Our speakers – Penelope Hobhouse, Jinny Blom and Sarah Price – represent three generations of women designers and will discuss their work, as well as consider the role of women in garden design past, present and future. Book now for Standard or Premium tickets. All tickets are allocated seating with premium ticket holders seated in the front section of the lecture theatre.

Penelope Hobhouse is a garden writer, garden designer, garden historian, lecturer and gardener. For 14 years she was in charge of the National Trust garden at Tintinhull House in Somerset. Now in her eighties, she has recently moved house and is relishing the opportunity of developing a new garden.

Jinny Blom set up a landscape and garden design practice in 2000, having previously followed a career as a psychologist. Her gardens are defined by beautiful craftsmanship and intelligent planting. She is currently working on projects in the UK, Italy, the USA and Kenya.

Sarah Price trained in fine art before becoming a garden designer. She achieved worldwide recognition for her work at the Olympic Park in 2012. With a life-long love of wild and natural environments, she believes gardens should inspire a deeper connection with the natural world.

Talk details

- **Date** Tuesday 19 May 2015.
- **Venue** Royal Geographical Society, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR.

PROGRAMME

- **6pm** Doors open – Cash bar available.
- **7pm** Talk begins.
- **8.30pm** Q&A session concludes.
- **9pm** Doors close.

TICKETS

- **Subscribers***
  Standard £20; Premium £30.
  Please quote the code **MSUB15** when booking.
- **Non-subscribers**
  Standard £25; Premium £35.
  All tickets are allocated seating. Premium tickets are located in the front section of the lecture theatre.

Gardens Illustrated reserves the right to replace any of the speakers with other speakers of equal stature in the unlikely event that any of them are unable to attend. Tickets must be booked in advance. Please let us know when booking of any special access requirements. Tickets are non-refundable. Driving to the lecture is not advised. Nearest London Underground station is South Kensington. Cash bar.
* To subscribe see page 32.

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ANDREW MONTGOMERY; CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Discover the surprising variety of plants that make up the umbellifer family at our talk with Marina Christopher and Fergus Garrett.

JASON INGRAM, TORIE CHUGG, SHARON PEARSON, RACHEL WARNE, MARTIN HUGHES-JONES / GAP PHOTOS.

Monday 1 June 2015

The allure of umbellifers

Spend a day at Great Dixter with nurserywoman Marina Christopher and head gardener Fergus Garrett looking at umbellifers, their uses in the garden and enduring appeal

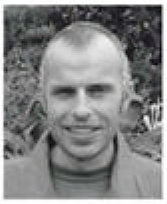
With the gardens at Great Dixter as a backdrop, Marina and Fergus will spend the day looking at the variety of umbellifers available to gardeners and how they can be used to best effect.

In the morning, Marina and Fergus will demonstrate the botanical characteristics of the many different species of umbellifer found in the flower and vegetable garden, their various commercial uses and their importance to the ecology of the garden as excellent attractors of insects and pollinators.

In the afternoon you'll be taken on a guided tour of the gardens and Marina and Fergus will explain how they use umbellifers in the garden and ways in which they can be combined with other plants.

Your day includes lunch and refreshments and a 10 per cent discount on plants at the nursery (valid on the day only).

Marina Christopher trained in botany before becoming a nurserywoman 30 years ago. She set up her own nursery, Phoenix Perennial Plants in Hampshire, in 2003, which is renowned for its exceptional plant choices and for its focus on particular species that are beneficial to insects.



Head gardener **Fergus Garrett** is an expert plantsman who gardened alongside Great Dixter's late owner Christopher Lloyd until his death in 2006. Fergus continues to garden in the spirit of innovation for which Christo was renowned and ensures that Great Dixter remains one of England's finest gardens.

Event details

- **Date** Monday 1 June 2015.
- **Venue** Great Dixter, near Hastings in East Sussex.

PROGRAMME

- **10am** Arrival and coffee.
- **10.30am** Talk from Marina Christopher and Fergus Garrett on umbellifers and their importance in the garden.
- **1pm** Lunch in the Great Hall.
- **1.45pm** Marina and Fergus lead walks around the gardens.
- **4pm** Tea in the nursery, plus the opportunity to buy plants.

TICKETS

- Tickets cost £100, and must be booked in advance.

Tickets and directions will be sent out prior to the event. Places are limited so booking is essential. Please advise us when booking of any dietary requirements or accessibility queries.

For more details about the day itself call Great Dixter on 01797 254048 or go to greatdixter.co.uk
Great Dixter, Northiam, Rye,
East Sussex TN31 6PH.

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The Garden House.

28 June – 1 July 2015

Devon Garden Tour

Join our exclusive four-day tour of some of the finest gardens of Devon, in the company of plant and garden expert Noël Kingsbury

Tucked in the southwest corner of England, Devon is home to a contrasting landscape of wild, romantic moorland, wooded coombes and rich red earth giving rise to a fantastic array of gardens.

The tour will begin at the National Trust property of **Knightshayes** with formal and woodland gardens and an impressive walled kitchen garden. From here the tour continues with a mix of wonderful, mostly private, gardens ranging from the New Perennial planting at **Holbrook Garden** (see issue 214) and the timeless traditional country garden of **Bickham House** (see issue 214) to the contemporary, ambitious and challenging **Plaz Metaxu** (see issue 160); from rare planting and careful plant associations of **The Garden House** and **Little Ash**, the sub-tropical plantings of **Coleton Fishacre** (see issue 188), to the modern sculpture of **Heather Jansch**, whose work sits amid an accomplished garden setting at **Sedgewell Coach House Gardens.**

Your base for the tour will be the enchanting **Hotel Endsleigh** overlooking the River Tamar with its stunning terraced gardens and follies with wooded walks, thought to be one of the last commissions of 18th-century landscapist Humphry Repton.

This tour has been arranged exclusively for readers of *Gardens Illustrated* by Boxwood Tours, Quality Garden Holidays, a specialist garden tour company set up in 1990 by Sue and Brian Macdonald, Kew-trained, professional gardeners.

Dr Noël Kingsbury is an expert in perennials and planting schemes and regularly writes and lectures on the subject. He is also a planting designer himself.

Booking details

- **Dates** 28 June – 1 July 2015
- **Price** £1,895 per person, based on two people sharing. (A single supplement of £200 will be levied by the hotel).

The price includes all travel between gardens, plus dinner with wine, bed and breakfast for three nights at Hotel Endsleigh and two lunches. The price does not include travel insurance or travel to and from the start/finish point.

TO BOOK

For details or to book contact
Boxwood Tours, Quality Garden Holidays, Rhiw, Llanbedr, Gwynedd LL45 2NT.
Telephone +44 1341 241717.
Email mail@boxwoodtours.co.uk
Website boxwoodtours.co.uk

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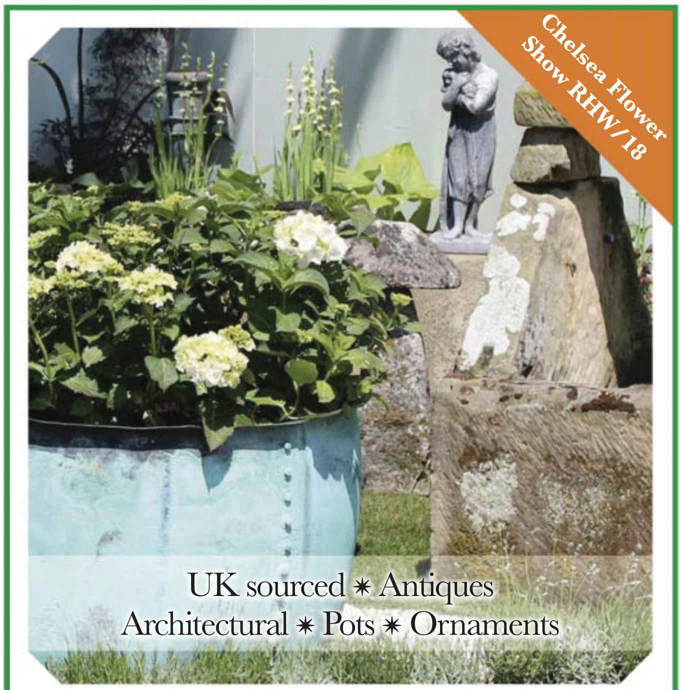

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Dig in

What's happening, where to go, what's in flower and what to buy this month

NEWS COMPILED BY SORREL EVERTON

Visit Carstramon Wood in Scotland, a large broad-leaved woodland carpeted with bluebells in late spring

OUT AND ABOUT

Where the wild things are

Discover some of Britain's best nature-inspired garden spaces with *Wild Garden Weekends*, a new guide to exploring secret gardens, wild meadows, tucked-away campsites and kitchen garden cafés – all with an emphasis on stainability and an appreciation of nature. With more than 400 ideas of places to visit, this is an informative celebration of the wild and wonderful. *Wild Garden Weekends* by Tania Pascoe (Wild Things Publishing, £16.99). **OFFER** *Gardens Illustrated* readers can get 25 per cent off the price of the book (that's £12.75 instead of £16.99), with free UK p&p, by heading to **wildthingspublishing.com** and entering 'Wild Garden Weekends' as the coupon code (valid until 31 May 2015).

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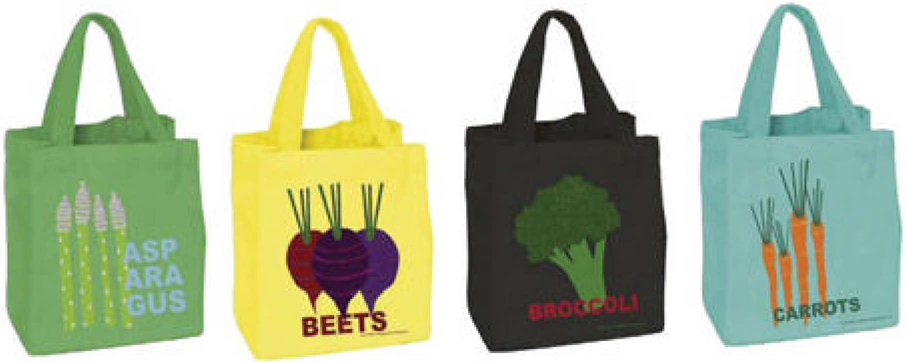
Kate Winslet stars as the fictional landscape gardener Sabine De Barra in the new film *A Little Chaos*.

NATIONAL EVENT

Gardening past and present

There's a touch of Hollywood glamour to this year's National Gardening Week (13-19 April), which coincides with the release in cinemas of a historical drama with garden design at its heart. Directed by Alan Rickman, *A Little Chaos* stars Kate Winslet as the fictional landscape gardener Sabine De Barra, who is hired by the French landscape architect André Le Nôtre to work on the gardens at Versailles. Other events for the week include National Open Gardens Day on 17 April, when a number of gardens open for free. **nationalgardeningweek.org.uk**



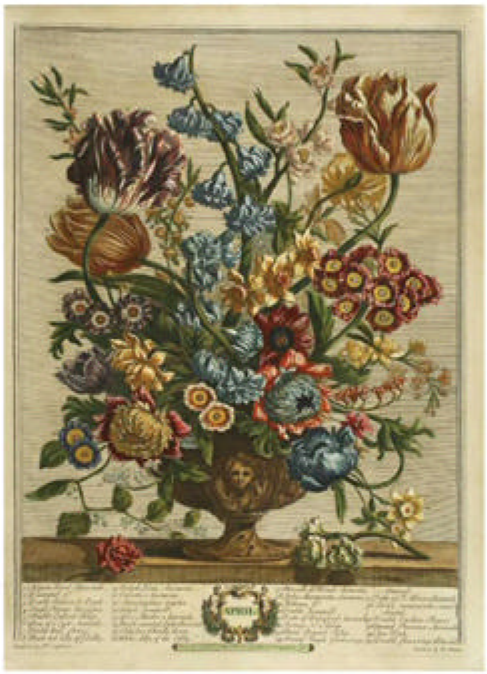
CARRY ON IN STYLE

These strong, canvas tote bags with bright, graphic vegetable designs are a stylish solution for carrying your shopping home from the supermarket or farmers' market, or taking your lunch to work. Designed by crafter Leslie Astor, the bags are available in two sizes – medium (£13.99) and mini (as shown above, £12.98) – from **doodle-bag.com**

GARDEN ART

Fine engravings

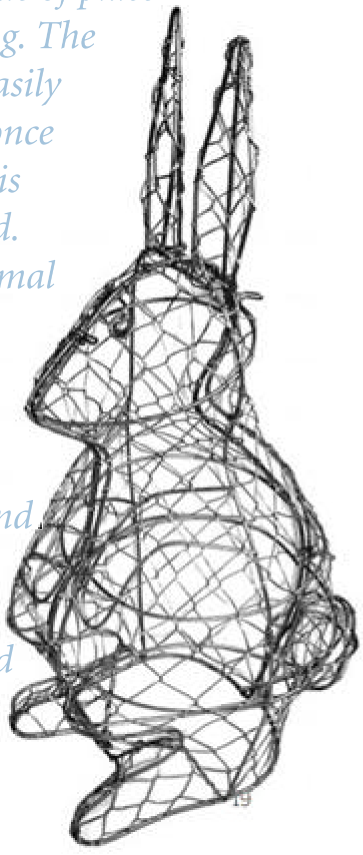
Plates from the first commercial horticultural catalogue will be offered for sale at the Spring Decorative Fair. The 12 hand-coloured engravings of flower arrangements – one for each month – were created in a collaboration between an artist, engraver and nursery owner to sell as bound sets to wealthy subscribers, as well as to showcase the plants and seeds available from Furber's Kensington nursery. Specialist print dealer Nicholas Price is excited by the fine condition of the plates, dated 1730. Few of us can afford the asking price of £33,000, but the prints are still worth admiring. Spring Decorative Antiques & Textiles Fair, 21-26 April, Battersea Park, London SW11. **decorativefair.com**



NICHOLAS PRICE FINE ART

TOPIARY FUN

Get hoppy in the garden this Easter with the new, wire, rabbit-shaped topiary frame from Burgon & Ball. Shape your growing plant, such as box, to the frame and give your burgeoning Easter bunny pride of place each spring. The frame is easily removed once the shape is established. Other animal topiary frames available include a cockerel and a squirrel. £18.95, burgonandball.com



GROW YOUR OWN

Pippa Greenwood offers help

Regular BBC Radio 4 *Gardeners' Question Time* panelist Pippa Greenwood has a helpful Grow Your Own scheme. Choose a four, six or ten vegetable pack and receive garden-ready plants. You'll also get an ASK PIPPA credit for help in solving queries, plus Pippa will email you weekly advice and tips. *Gardens Illustrated* readers can get a 10% discount on their choice of pack. Enter the code 12400-DABQV when ordering at **pippagreenwood.com.** Valid until 4 May 2015.

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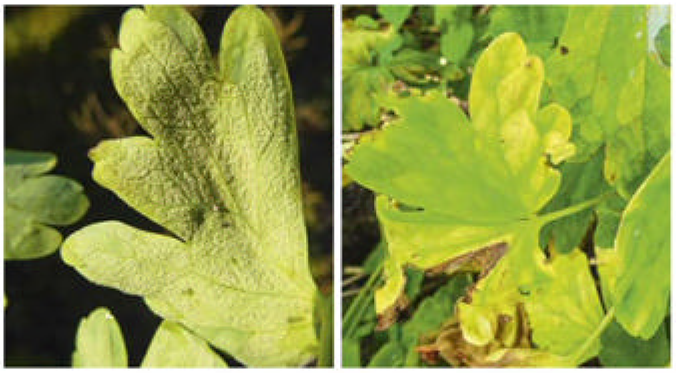

PLANT DISEASE

Look to your aquilegias

Carrie Thomas of Touchwood Plants is urging gardeners to watch out for signs of a new, virulent downy mildew affecting aquilegias. Carrie, who is worried her National Collection may not last into the flowering season and, indeed, if aquilegias will ever grow in her soil again, asks gardeners to email her if they find the disease on their plants so she can build an accurate picture of the virus. For details on how to spot signs and report findings please visit **touchwoodplants.co.uk**

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Diary

- **Great Dixter Spring Plant Fair**

Small but perfectly formed plant fair with exceptional nurseries from across UK and Europe. 28-29 March, 10am-4.30pm. £8 (includes entry to the garden). Great Dixter, Northiam, Rye, East Sussex TN31 6PH. **Tel 01797 254048, greatdixter.co.uk**

- **RHS Great London Plant Fair**

Specialist nursery sales and a series of talks from the growers. This year's focus is on innovative front gardens. 14-15 April, 10am-9pm (on Tuesday), 10am-5pm (Wednesday). **rhs.org.uk**

- **Behind the Mask: The Life of Vita Sackville-West**

Author Matthew Dennison will be talking about his book, which looks at the life behind the public mask of Vita Sackville-West, creator of the gardens at Sissinghurst Castle. 22 April, 6.30-8pm, £20. Garden Museum, Lambeth Palace Road, London SE1 7LB. **Tel 020 7401 8865, gardenmuseum.org.uk**

Flower photography with Clare West.

- **Flower photography course**

Photographer Clare West holds a new course on getting better shots of your flowers. Held at flower farm Green and Gorgeous. 22 April, £150, 10am-4pm. Green and Gorgeous, The Bothy, Little Stoke, Wallingford, Oxfordshire OX10 6AX. **Tel 07977 445041, greenandgorgeousflowers.co.uk**

- **Borde Hill: Scent in the Garden**

Stephen Lacey talks about his new book *RHS Companion to Scented Plants*. 23 April, 1.30-5pm. £27. (RHS discount available) Borde Hill Garden, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 1XP. **Tel 01444 450326, bordehill.co.uk**

- **Plant Finders Fair**

Browse the selection of specialist nurseries and makers. 24-26 April, £17 includes entry to the gardens (discount if booked in advance or a Kew member). Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 3AB. **Tel 020 8332 5655, kew.org**

- **Plant Hunters' Fair**

Specialist nurseries, plus access to the walled garden and bluebell woods, and guided tours (1pm, additional £2). 25 April, 10am-4pm, £1. Sugnall Walled Garden, Eccleshall, Staffordshire ST21 6NF. **Tel 01785 850820, sugnall.co.uk**

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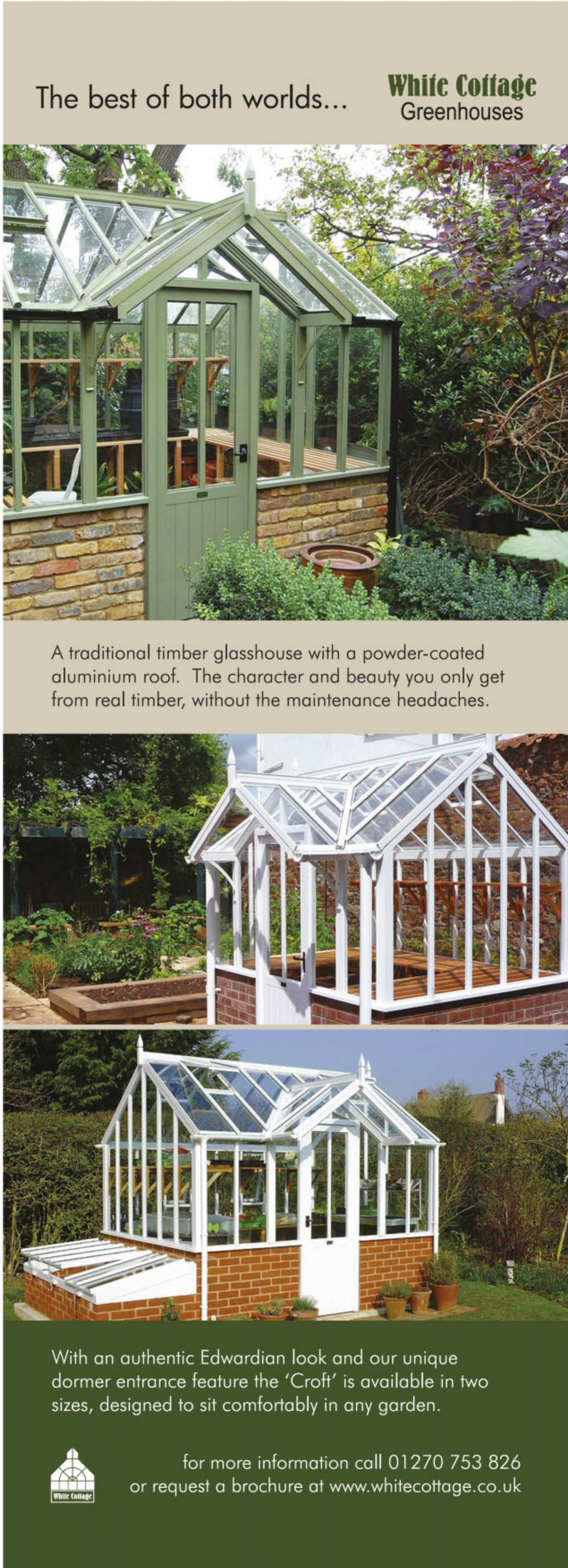

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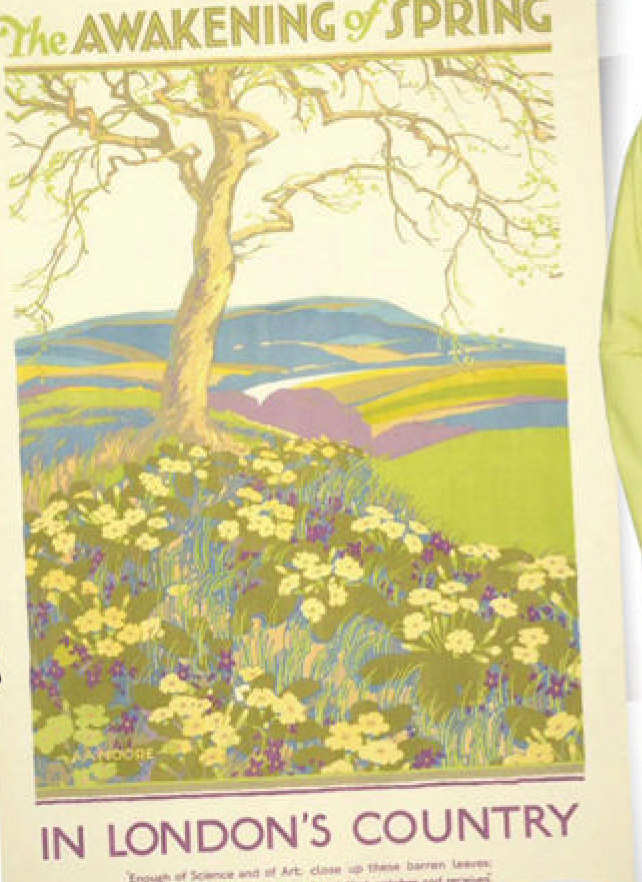
Women's Economy Pagoda Umbrella, plum, £9.99, 0845 602 3712, brolliesgalore.co.uk

Women's original adjustable gloss wellington boots, dusty lavender, £100, 0330 333 4290, hunterboots.com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'Enough of Science and of Art: close up these barren leaves; Come forth and bring with you a heart that watches and receives'
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***The Awakening of Spring* poster,** from £9.95 for an A4 print, 0800 952 0089, ltmuseumshop.co.uk

Supercell Texapore women's waterproof and lightweight jacket, lemonade, £135, jack-wolfskin.co.uk

Haws watering can, cream, £50, 01993 823117, burford.co.uk

Nunki copper weeder, £27, 0845 330 3148, implementations.co.uk

Fermob Luxembourg pedestal square table and armchair, Fjord blue, £470 and £199, 020 8878 1994, barbed.co.uk

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Hydra copper swing hoe, £89, 0845 330 3148, implementations.co.uk

Herbies mini snips, blue, purple or green, 10.5cm long, £4.50, 0300 123 2025, shop.nationaltrust.org.uk

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Ballpoint pen copper plant labels, 10cm, £18 for 25, 01279 842685, alitags.com

Belle birdfeeder, mushroom, £19.95, 01872 858787, greenandblue.co.uk

Sarek field cap, UN blue, windproof and fleece lined, £45, fjallraven.co.uk

Nesting spiral, £6.95, 01981 500391, wigglywigglers.co.uk

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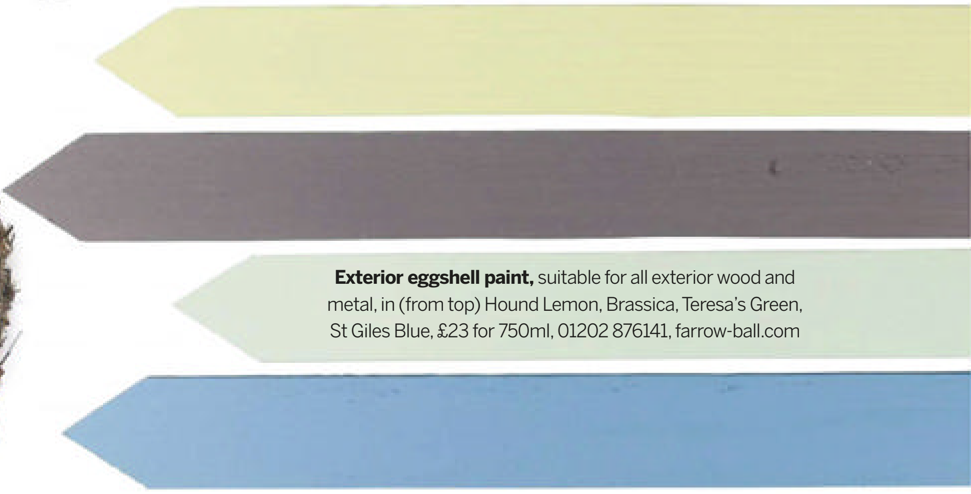
Strulch dual action mulch, £10.95 for 100-litre bag, 0845 402 5300, harrodhorticultural.com



Exterior eggshell paint, suitable for all exterior wood and metal, in (from top) Hound Lemon, Brassica, Teresa's Green, St Giles Blue, £23 for 750ml, 01202 876141, farrow-ball.com

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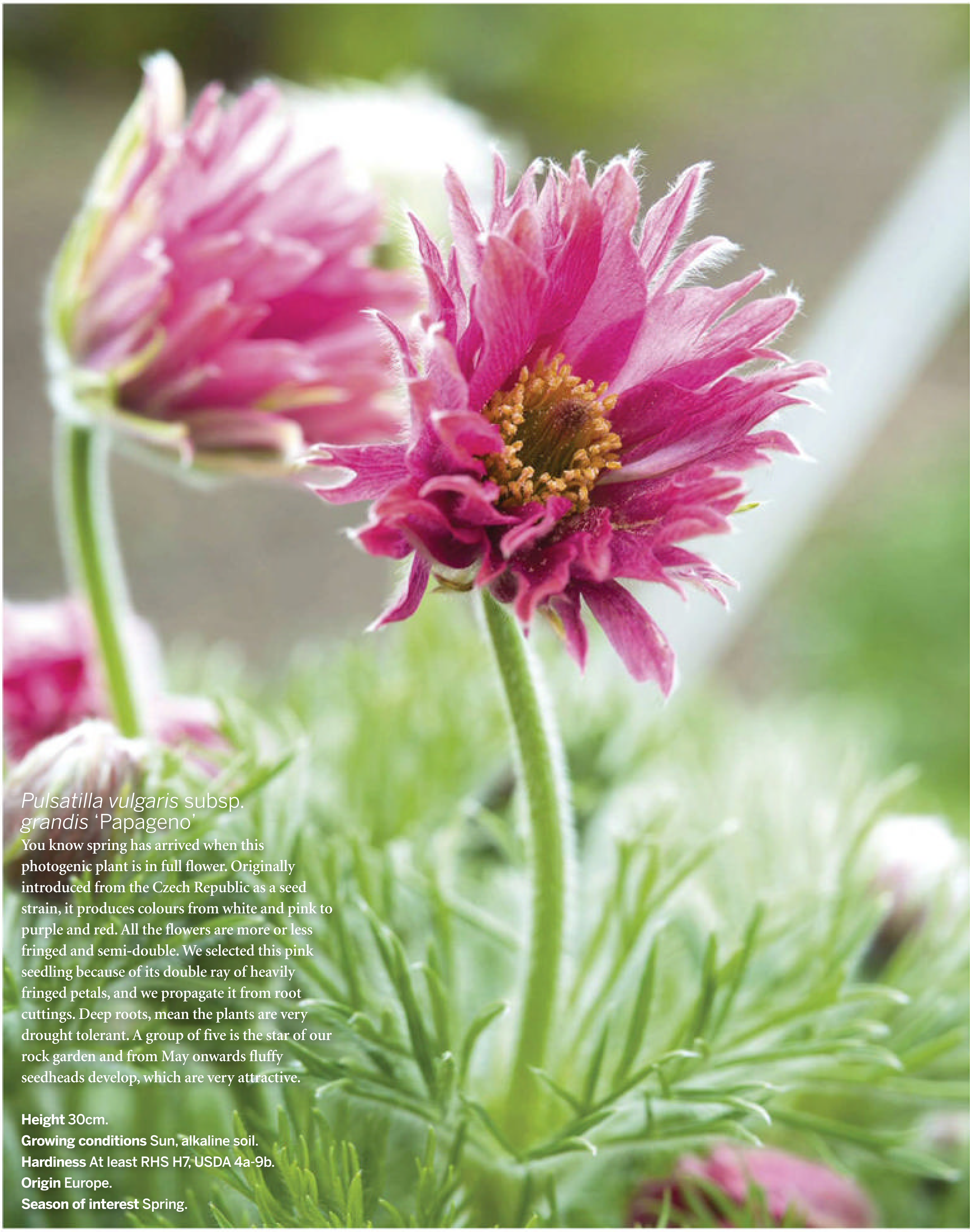
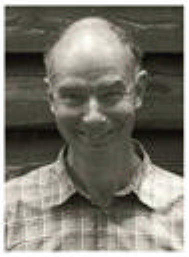


Pulsatilla vulgaris subsp. *grandis* 'Papageno'

You know spring has arrived when this photogenic plant is in full flower. Originally introduced from the Czech Republic as a seed strain, it produces colours from white and pink to purple and red. All the flowers are more or less fringed and semi-double. We selected this pink seedling because of its double ray of heavily fringed petals, and we propagate it from root cuttings. Deep roots, mean the plants are very drought tolerant. A group of five is the star of our rock garden and from May onwards fluffy seedheads develop, which are very attractive.

Height 30cm.
Growing conditions Sun, alkaline soil.
Hardiness At least RHS H7, USDA 4a-9b.
Origin Europe.
Season of interest Spring.

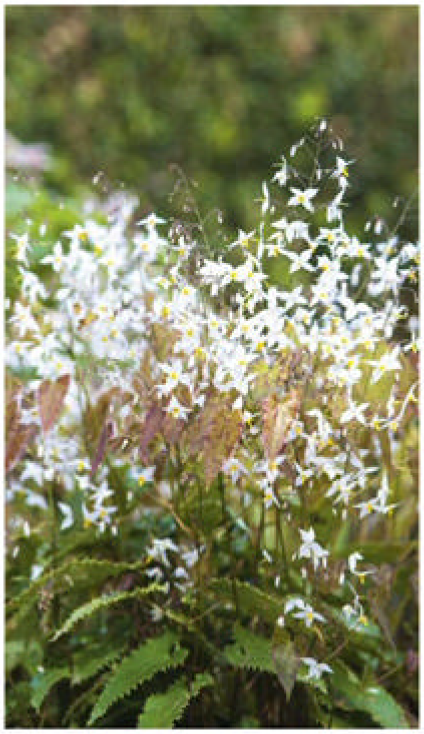

CHARLIE HOPKINSON

April plants

For many, spring in the Netherlands means one thing – tulips. However, Dutch nurseryman Hans finds plenty more plants worthy of a look

WORDS HANS KRAMER PHOTOGRAPHS MAAYKE DE RIDDER

Hans Kramer co-owns Kwekerij De Hessenhof in the Netherlands. hessenhof.nl



Epimedium stellulatum long-leaved

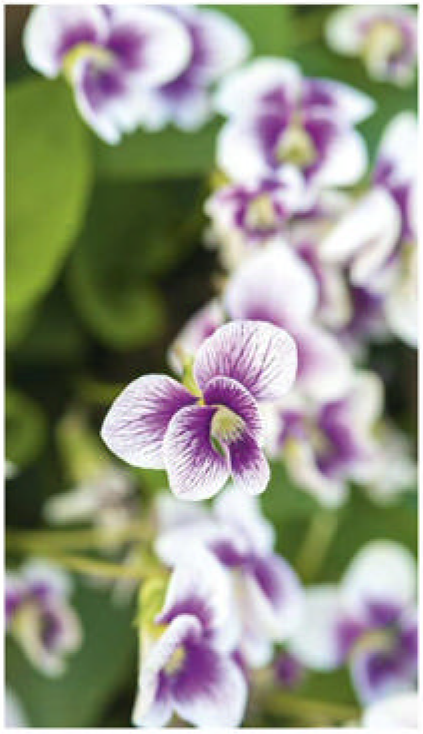
We grow around 60 different epimediums and, although it takes a while to establish itself, this is one of my favourites. Its unusual, long, spiny leaves are completely evergreen. In April, they're almost invisible under the mass of compound inflorescences of tiny, white, star-shaped flowers with conspicuous golden yellow stamens. It's less well known than the related 'Wudang Star', but its leaves and the richness of the flowers make it a much better plant.

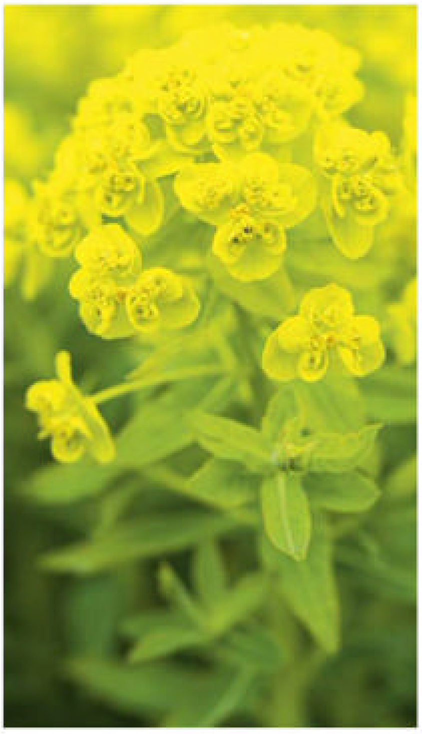
Height 45cm.
Growing conditions Humus-rich soil; dappled to deep shade.
Hardiness RHS H6 (no damage in the recent cold winters), USDA 4a-8b.
Origin China.
Season of interest Spring.

Viola 'Alice Witter'

A most attractive plant that is probably a cross between *V. cucullata* and *V. sororia* with perhaps the European *V. odorata* (sweet violet) involved. It flowers a month later than sweet violet and goes on for quite a while – sometimes until the end of May. With its big, red-violet centre that fades to the outside, leaving coloured veins, it mesmerises all who see it. Place it in a pot to make the most of the charming flowers that look assertively upwards. It's prolifically floriferous so if you grow it, you're sure to find seedlings, which breed 100 per cent true, in the cracks of paving next season.

Height 15cm.
Growing conditions Almost everywhere.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Origin North America.
Season of interest Spring.

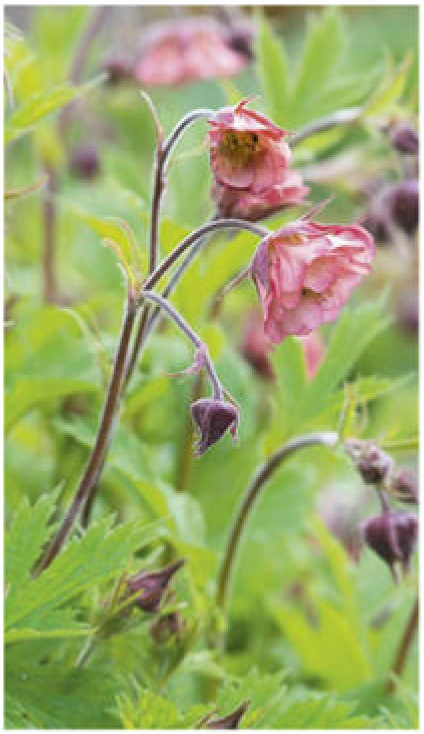




Euphorbia fragifera

My *Euphorbia fragifera* looks like a large form of the better-known *Euphorbia epithymoides* even though botanists say it is smaller. In spring, I am always surprised when I see so much power coming out of the soil. It takes less than a month from the first signs of this plant emerging out of the ground to it becoming a big mound of sea-green foliage topped with clear-yellow flower heads. As a bonus, two months later you'll be rewarded with orange-pink seedheads, hence the name *fragifera*, which means 'bearing strawberries'.

Height 80cm.
Growing conditions Normal garden soil; sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H6.
Origin Croatia to Albania.
Season of interest Spring.



Geum 'Bell Bank'

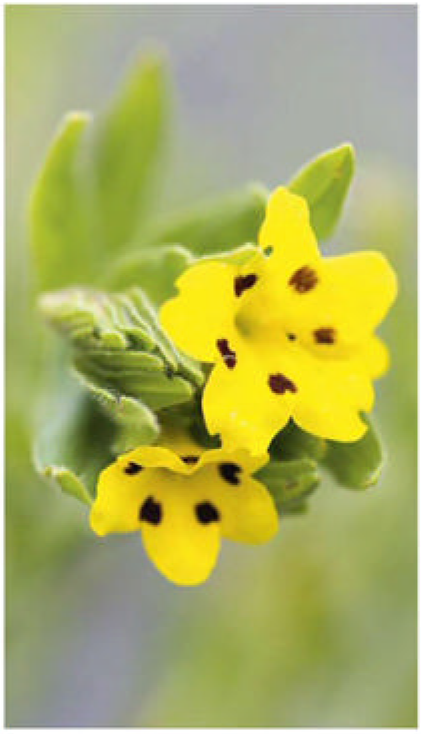
A showy plant that almost disappeared. Stephen Rogers, of Dove Cottage in West Yorkshire, brought it back as an unnamed selection after the original raiser lost it. Now it has a name and is deservedly popular. It looks like a more colourful form of *G. rivale* 'Leonard's Variety' but is much taller. From late April, dark, copper-red buds open into semi-double rows of petals in deep coppery pink. Over time, they fade to light pink but the full show goes on for at least six weeks. Geums like heavy soil and on my sandy soil need dividing at least every three years.

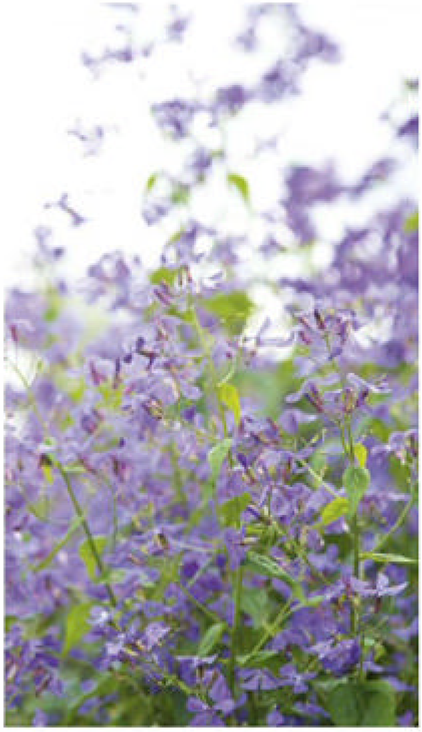
Height 50cm.
Growing conditions Heavy, fertile soil; sun to part shade, not too dry.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Origin Europe.
Season of interest Spring – early summer.

Arnebia pulchra

Many years ago I saw these growing by the roadside in the Caucasus in such abundance that they looked like yellow pulmonarias. But this is a more heavenly plant. Its common name is prophet flower because of the five black-brown spots on its flower petals that disappear completely after a few days. It grows more slowly then pulmonaria and does not want competition. The seeds, which are quickly dispersed while ripening, look almost like little nuts and ripen over a long period. You can pick them one by one out of the axils and sow them in early spring.

Height 35cm.
Growing conditions Humus-rich soil; dappled shade.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Origin Caucasus.
Season of interest Spring.





Lunaria annua 'Corfu Blue'

This honesty, collected in Corfu, is totally different to those forms with which you may be more familiar. For one thing, the flowers are smaller, but they are much more numerous and held in loose panicles that have a more natural appearance. I like the colour, as there's far more blue. Some people say it is perennial but I have never seen new rosettes after flowering time. But who cares – it spreads so many seeds that, once planted, you will never be without it. And, occasionally, you may be lucky enough to see an orange tip butterfly on it.

Height 80cm.
Growing conditions Ordinary soil; part shade to shade or sun.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4a-8b.
Origin Europe.
Season of interest Spring – early summer.

Places to visit

Recommended places to see seasonal plants at their best, both here in the UK and in mainland Europe.

In April the hordes of tourists who come in search of Dutch bulbs head to Keukenhof, but I prefer **Hortus Bulborum** in Limmen, 20 miles north of Amsterdam. There you'll find a collection of more than 4,000 different tulips, narcissus and hyacinths, including one of the oldest named tulip cultivars, *T.* 'Duc van Tol', which dates from 1595. Open 6 April to 16 May. Hortus Bulborum, Zuidkerkenlaan 23A, 1906 AC Limmen, the Netherlands. Tel +31 (0) 6 11 889489, hortus-bulborum.nl

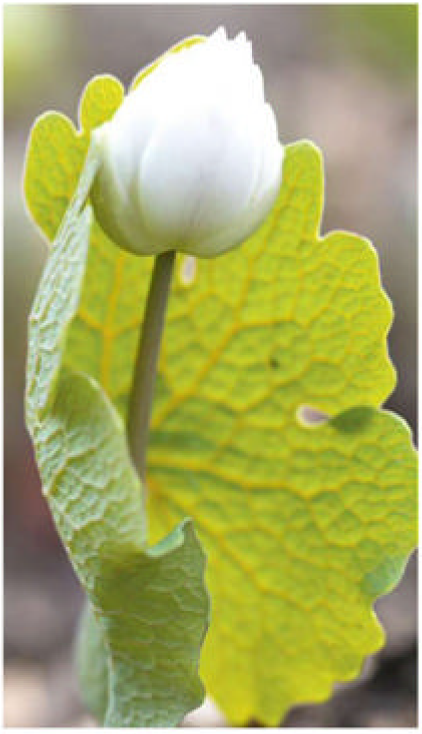
Hortus Bulborum.

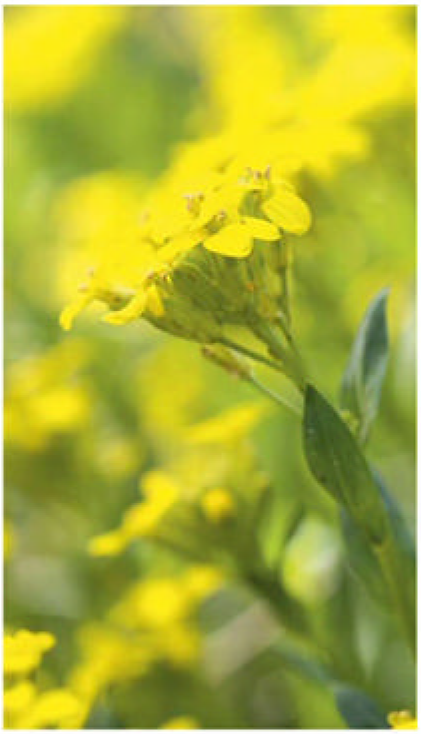
The **Utrecht Botanic Garden** is one of the best in Holland. It's also one of the oldest, dating back to 1639. It still remains part of the university, but has moved location to the site of a 19th-century fort in a science park known as De Uithof. You can spend hours exploring

Sanguinaria canadensis f. *multiplex*

We never seem to have enough of this fully double Canadian bloodroot in stock. To temper demand, I always tell people the flowers only last three days – and then only in cool weather. But they generally point out that's true of anything beautiful. And they're right. When you see the fully double flowers, which remind me of water lilies, you can't resist them. As it flowers, it develops handsome, deeply lobed, grey-green leaves, which remind me of *Macleaya*. Its fat rhizomes are filled with blood-red juice.

Height 25cm.
Growing conditions Fertile, humus-rich soil; part shade to shade.
Hardiness RHS H7, USDA 4b-9a.
Origin North America.
Season of interest Spring.





Alyssoides utriculata

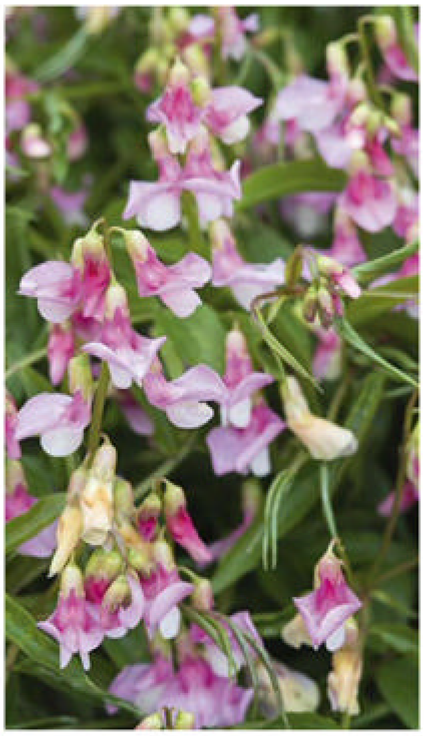
Although this looks a lot like a wallflower, its rosettes remain evergreen in the worst of winter and it lives much longer. Every spring you can enjoy the lively, clear-yellow flower spikes, where each flower has just four petals. After blooming, the spikes seem to stretch and make room for decorative seedheads with inflated seedpods that look like bladders and will provoke plenty of comment if you add them to a flower arrangement. You can collect the seeds to give to friends or leave them on the plant, as they'll easily self-seed.

Height 40cm.
Growing conditions Drought and lime tolerant; sun.
Hardiness RHS H6, USDA 6a-9a.
Origin Southwest Alps.
Season of interest Spring – early summer.

Lathyrus vernus f. *roseus*

In Croatia a few years ago, I saw robust, deep-pink-purple *Lathyrus vernus* growing in quite shady conditions along the edge of a wood. But this fine, long-living perennial, which comes in colours from white to pink and even blue, will grow happily in full sun. This one is more compact and has a far deeper colour than the better known *L. vernus* 'Alboroseus'. When the flowers are finished in the second half of May, the finely divided foliage takes over. The compact mound will stay fresh and green until the end of the summer.

Height 25cm.
Growing conditions Most soils; sun to part shade.
Hardiness RHS H7.
Origin Europe, Siberia.
Season of interest Spring.



the garden's 14 acres, which include a rock garden, greenhouses and several themed gardens. Open daily 1 March to 1 December. Botanische Tuinen Utrecht, Fort Hoofddijk, Budapestlaan 17, 3584 CD Utrecht, De Uithof, the Netherlands. uu.nl/botanischetuinen

In the UK, one of the best places to see bulbs is at the **Pashley Manor** tulip festival, which this year has added the cultivar *T.* 'Green Jay' to its display. This multi-flowered cultivar with a green flash up the middle of the petals can be spotted in the Golden Beds. Festival runs 22 April to 4 May. Pashley Manor Gardens, Ticehurst, Near Wadhurst, East Sussex TN5 7HE. Tel 01580 200888, pashleymanorgardens.com

To mark the quarter century since their rediscovery, the **Lost Gardens of Heligan** will play host to an exhibition of historical photographs. The gardens slipped into decline following the First World War before being rediscovered and restored in the 1990s. 'The Lost Images' will show pre-war photographs alongside those taken from 1990 onwards. The Lost Gardens of Heligan, Pentewan, St Austell, Cornwall PL26 6EN. Tel 01726 845100, heligan.com

The Lost Gardens of Heligan.

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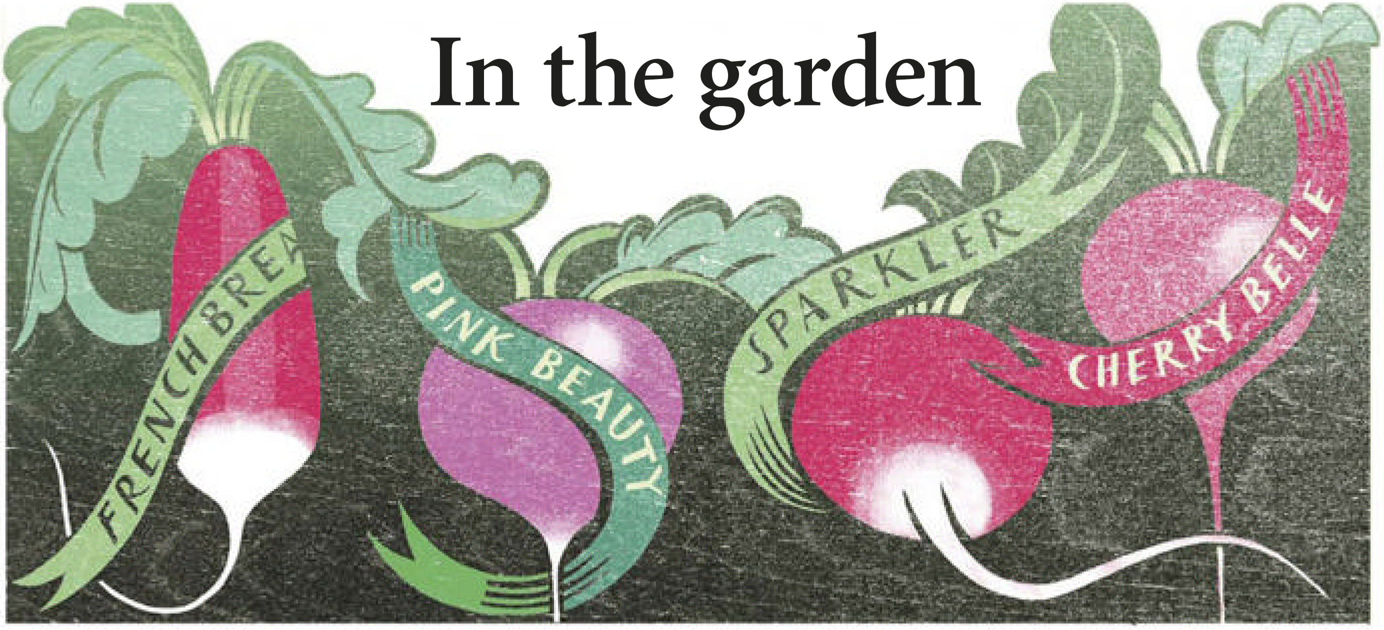
In the garden



April is the cruellest month for an impatient Jojo, but her frustration is tempered by fast-growing radishes and the anticipation of her first asparagus harvest

WORDS **JOJO TULLOH** ILLUSTRATIONS **SARAH YOUNG**

April is a terrible month for impatient gardeners. I know, I am one. With windowsills bristling with potted-up seedlings, the temptation to plant them out can be overpowering (and disastrous). It's very easy to let a few days of warm weather go to your head but planting out your tender courgettes, peppers, pumpkins and tomatoes before the last frost is a recipe for tears before breakfast (and I have wept them in the past).

If you really want to get your hands dirty why not plant radishes? The clever kitchen gardener will already have a row in the ground but for the rest of us now is the time to sow. With their flash of green, red and white, radishes are the beauty queens of the vegetable kingdom. Not only that but they are they among the fastest growing of all vegetables offering (almost) instant gratification. A plate of crisp, mildly peppery radishes makes the perfect spring dish (see following page). If sown successionally, all parts of the radish – leaf, root and seedpod – can be enjoyed in a salad at the same time. *Raphanus sativus* 'French Breakfast' is one of my favourites, a classic oval-shaped radish, magenta on top with a crisp, white tip and a mild, nutty flavour. Other favourites include 'Cherry Belle', a bright, cherry-red globe cultivar, 'Pink Beauty', a sweet, round radish with pink flesh, and 'Sparkler', a classic red and white radish that stays crisp for longer in the ground. For those with a penchant for the unusual, try 'Rat's Tail', which is grown not for its roots but for its edible pods – these elongated pencil-thick pods sometimes corkscrew and are good raw in salads, tossed into a stir fry or pickled. Before the pods form, the single-petal, pink-tinged flowers will lure beneficial pollinators, such as hoverflies, to your plot. Chiltern Seeds has all of the above, as well as a mixed packet of red, yellow, white and violet radishes from Italy.

Radishes should be sown in drills 1cm deep at a spacing of 2-4cm. They need to be kept well watered and should germinate quickly after two to three days. Thin any clustered seedlings to 2-4cm if necessary. Sow side by side with slow-germinating parsnips, which are often forgotten and accidentally dug up. A row of radishes makes for a good reminder. Because they are quick growing, radishes can be intercropped with overwintered garlic or onions, or sown around fruit bushes, such as gooseberries or currants. Joy Larkcom suggests pressing a jam jar lid down into the soil and sowing seeds into the indented circle to make dots of radishes among rows of sweet corn.

For another 'instant' spring crop, sow a row of mixed salads. Try a mix of reds and greens, such as the Italian Misticanza mix (radicchio, endive, orache, mizuna, kale, mustard and corn salad) or the Provençal Mesclun mix (loose-leaved salads, such as chicory, rocket and watercress). Both can be sown now and will fill up bare earth with colour and texture and bring benefits to your salad bowl. ▷

WHAT TO SOW NOW

• My intention is always for beauty and fruitfulness to go hand in hand. The start of the growing season is so exciting. What to put next to each other? The possibilities of a plot more colourful than ever before are enough to lose my head. In the past I've sown a 'flag of salad', with triangular wedges of different varieties radiating out from the centre. These germinated erratically and I got some pitying looks from my neighbour. Another year, a patchwork of squares, sown individually with sorrel, chard, beetroot and carrots, and mixed with annual flowers, looked pretty as did tall, red orache, alongside striped borlotti beans intertwined with the climbing *Ipomoea lobata*. Last year our local primary school's garden had hazel wigwams twined with blue morning glory and the bean 'A Cosse Violette'. On my plot I contrasted the black-green leaves of cavolo nero with the lime-washed petals of sunflower 'Vanilla Ice' and neon-green zinnias. *Dahlia* 'Collarette Dandy' looked good underplanted with courgettes. This year I think the feathery fronds of my asparagus bed might work well with a row of lavender, and my rainbow chard will look good behind my step-over apples. The possibilities are endless…

In the kitchen

Growing your own fruit and vegetables provides you with ingredients that are otherwise hard to source. This is at its most apparent in spring when the tips, leaves and shoots of plants that will crop later on can be used as salad ingredients or to flavour soups and tarts. Many of these ingredients (peas, broad beans, asparagus and herbs) are at their very best when eaten as soon as possible after they are picked. One of my favourite spring flavours is green garlic. I sow my garlic fairly close together so I can lift some of it early and still have a decent crop later on. At this stage the whole bulb and leaf can be used. I peel, chop and sauté the bulbs and leaves (usually six, when they look like spring onions, or four, when they resemble slim leeks, are enough to serve four) and add them to very simple, clean-tasting soups with potato, or to a quiche with leeks and nettles or fold them through focaccia dough. Dolmades rolled using tender, spring vine leaves can be made with rice, green garlic, raisins and pine nuts. A little later on I use green garlic with the first, very small, artichokes in a sloppy soup of peas with a poached egg on top.

> If the weather's good I'll be lighting a fire in the back garden and cooking a paella with spears of asparagus, fanned out like the spokes of a wheel

Pea tendrils, onion tops and the leafy tips of broad beans can be eaten in a salad of tiny new potatoes and brown shrimps or stirred into a green risotto at the last moment. Blackcurrant leaves can be used to infuse custards for ice cream.

Asparagus should be coming into season at the end of this month. This is the first year I will be cropping asparagus from my plot. The first few spears will be eaten simply with lemon and butter but later on (I'm hoping for a bumper crop) I will be forced to try a little harder. As the spears get a bigger I will be grilling them and using them in a variety of ways. First you need to bend the stems, they should snap low down where they become woody (reserve the bottoms to flavour a stock for soups) blanch them in boiling salted water for one minute, then spread out to cool on a tea towel. The spears are rubbed with olive oil and grilled over charcoal (or on a griddle) for about six minutes, turning frequently. They are very good served simply with a dressing of sea salt, lemon and olive oil, and a few shavings of parmesan, or with sieved hard-boiled eggs, capers and radishes. Or try a vinaigrette made with freshly squeezed orange juice, vinegar and olive oil. If the weather's good enough I'll be lighting a fire in the back garden and cooking a paella with razor clams and spears of asparagus, fanned out like the spokes of a wheel. Or I may make a soufflé with the stalks puréed and blended, and the tips added whole to the batter.

RECIPES

Spring on a plate

Take a bunch of your prettiest radishes and wash them leaving the stalks on. Put them on a plate with a small pile of sea salt and a pat of unsalted butter. Smear a little butter on to each radish, by pushing it into the butter pat, sprinkle with sea salt and eat. Another delicious idea that takes a little more effort is to serve new vegetables as crudités with a **hot anchovy cream**. For this you need: **2 large cloves of garlic, peeled and minced, 150ml olive oil, 150ml double cream, 2 x 50g tins anchovies.** Put the garlic and the olive oil in a pan and simmer over a very, very low heat until the garlic is soft and mashable. Add the anchovies and cook over the same low heat until they have melted into the olive oil. Add the cream and cook slowly on same very low heat until you have a velvety, salty emulsion (up to 30 min). Serve in a warmed bowl with vegetables arranged around it.

Asparagus risotto

450g asparagus, 350g arborio rice, 1 onion, finely chopped, 125ml white wine, 1 litre or so stock (vegetable or chicken), 2tbsp olive oil, 25g butter, salt and pepper, parmesan. Serves 4.

Remove the asparagus tips and cook very briefly in your stock before removing, refreshing in cold water and reserving to add at the end. Next, finely chop the asparagus stalks and cook for 1 minute in the same stock before removing. Sauté the finely chopped onion in the olive oil and butter. When soft, add the chopped stalks, stir well and add the rice; stir to coat each grain, then add the wine, stir until it is absorbed. Add the stock, one or two ladlefuls at a time, and wait for it to be absorbed before adding any more. Stir regularly until the rice is cooked but still has a little bite. Add the asparagus tips, season and serve with parmesan curls.

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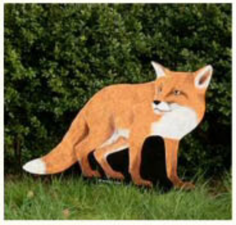

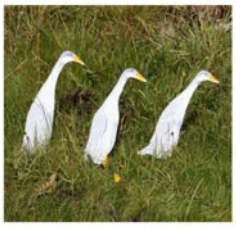

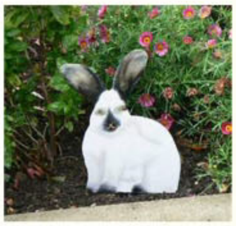

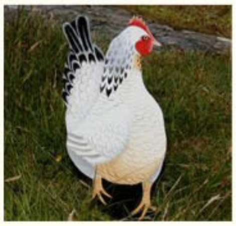

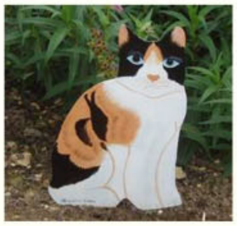

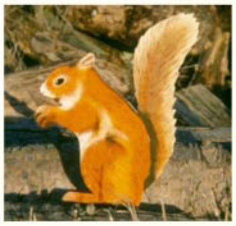

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Katharine Cook

After training with the RHS and Kew, Katharine's hobby as an allotment gardener has grown into a career as assistant head gardener at Dunham Massey

PORTRAIT ANDREW MONTGOMERY

Earliest garden memory My sister and I tried to keep snails as pets by making them little garden homes in plant pots, but they were always gone the next morning. I couldn't understand why they'd want to leave!

Who has inspired your career? I didn't really have a career previously – I worked in a series of shops – but got an allotment about ten years ago and I enjoyed being outside so much that I pursued it.

Favourite garden that has influenced you Wildside nursery, Devon. The planting here is different to traditional gardens. It plays with your concept of space and size and as you look across the garden it feels as if you're looking over a canyon or mountain range.

Three worthwhile tips for every gardener Finish is everything: you can do great work pruning or prepping, but if you leave it untidy, no one will notice. The basics are vital: you have to keep your tools clean and tidy, prep the soil before planting, put things away after you've used them and so on. Take time to think a job through so that you don't waste time going back and forth having forgotten a tool or something.

Most valuable training At RHS Rosemoor I was trained in, and gained my certificates for, a variety of kit, such as tractor and trailer driving and hedge trimmers and brush cutters and so on. This has been the most valuable in terms of working at gardens, as I can pick up these pieces of equipment and start working anywhere.

What principles have guided your attitude to gardening To be compassionate to the plants, animals and people around me. I follow my own rules of doing a job properly, not cutting corners, leaving a good finish and attempting never to double-handle. And to have fun.

What heartens you about our attitudes to horticulture today? I recently watched the documentary *Project Wild Thing*. It is about how children are becoming detached from nature and the health implications this has on their futures. Although it saddened me, it also pleased me that there are people in the world who are realising the value of the great outdoors (projectwildthing.com).

Favourite gardening books *Botany for Gardeners* by Brian Capon is a great book for getting you started on the science of plants. Ben-Erik van Wyk has also written a number of useful books, especially if you're studying horticulture.

Contact Katharine.Cook@nationaltrust.org.uk

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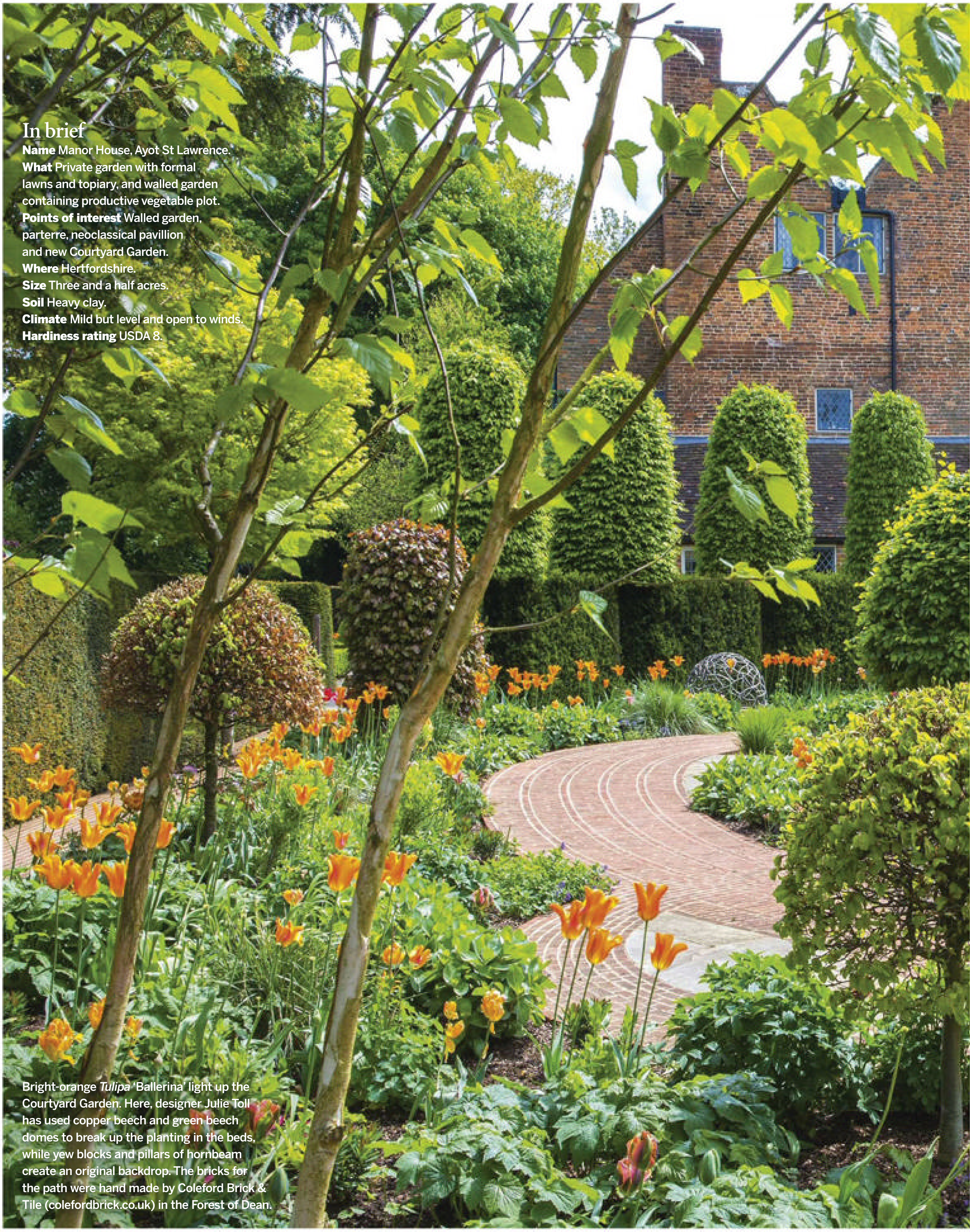


In brief

Name Manor House, Ayot St Lawrence.
What Private garden with formal lawns and topiary, and walled garden containing productive vegetable plot.
Points of interest Walled garden, parterre, neoclassical pavillion and new Courtyard Garden.
Where Hertfordshire.
Size Three and a half acres.
Soil Heavy clay.
Climate Mild but level and open to winds.
Hardiness rating USDA 8.

Bright-orange *Tulipa* 'Ballerina' light up the Courtyard Garden. Here, designer Julie Toll has used copper beech and green beech domes to break up the planting in the beds, while yew blocks and pillars of hornbeam create an original backdrop. The bricks for the path were hand made by Coleford Brick & Tile (colefordbrick.co.uk) in the Forest of Dean.

Modern manors

Take one Tudor manor, two owners with contrasting styles, add the design flair of Julie Toll and the result is a calm, well-balanced garden that oozes contemporary style while remaining loyal to its glorious past

WORDS **TIM RICHARDSON** PHOTOGRAPHS **MARIANNE MAJERUS**

This is not a garden achieved on a wing and a prayer: successive owners have invested a great deal in the garden over the past decades, and it shows

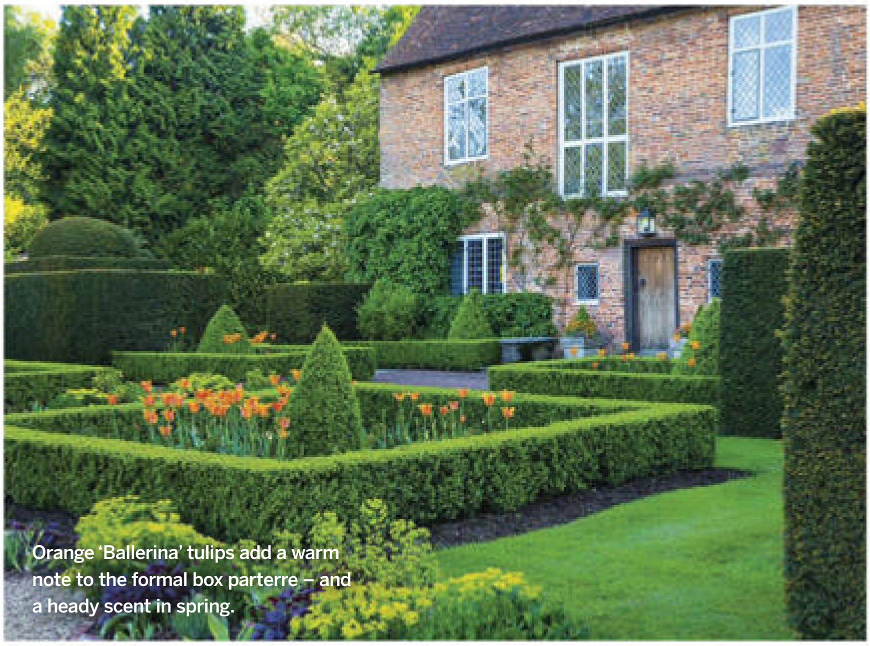
With elegant formal areas defined by topiary, let-it-all-hang-out herbaceous plantings and a serious productive walled garden, the garden at the Manor House, Ayot St Lawrence, apparently boasts 'a bit of everything' in quite a small area. But it holds it all in balance thanks to a high standard of continuing maintenance. This is not a garden achieved on a wing and a prayer: successive owners have invested a great deal in the garden over the past decades – and it shows.

Designer Julie Toll, who's been associated with the garden since 1996, says the owners buck gender stereotypes because "she loves formal topiary and he likes informal plantings". The garden's oscillation between these opposing interests is one of its strengths.

The original redbrick manor house was built in 1536 by Nicholas Bristowe, a keeper of the crown jewels, on land owned by Sir Thomas Parr, father of Katherine Parr (Henry VIII's last wife). Notwithstanding the distant royal connection, this was, and remains, a small manor house of the kind inhabited by gentleman farmers, although it was 'modernised' during the reign of Queen Anne with a new western façade.

The first thing visitors see is the parterre that prefaces the delightfully 'olde-worlde' Tudor front of the house. This is visible through the Peacock Gates, which form a break in the long, beech hedge that bounds the eastern side of the garden. Originally designed by John Brookes, the parterre is a perfect counterweight to the architecture. Julie respected its existing dimensions but updated it by adding a brick pathway, box pyramids and plantings (tulips in spring, then a dwarf patio rose) in the box compartments.

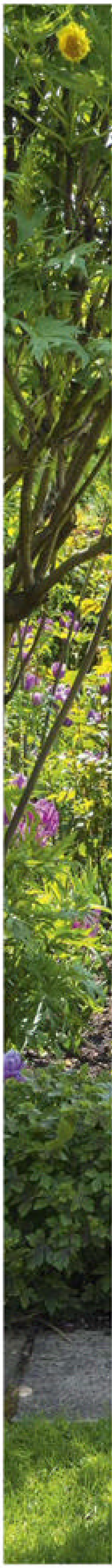
Moving from here to the south side of the house the formality continues in the form of a small neoclassical pavilion in 18th-century ▷

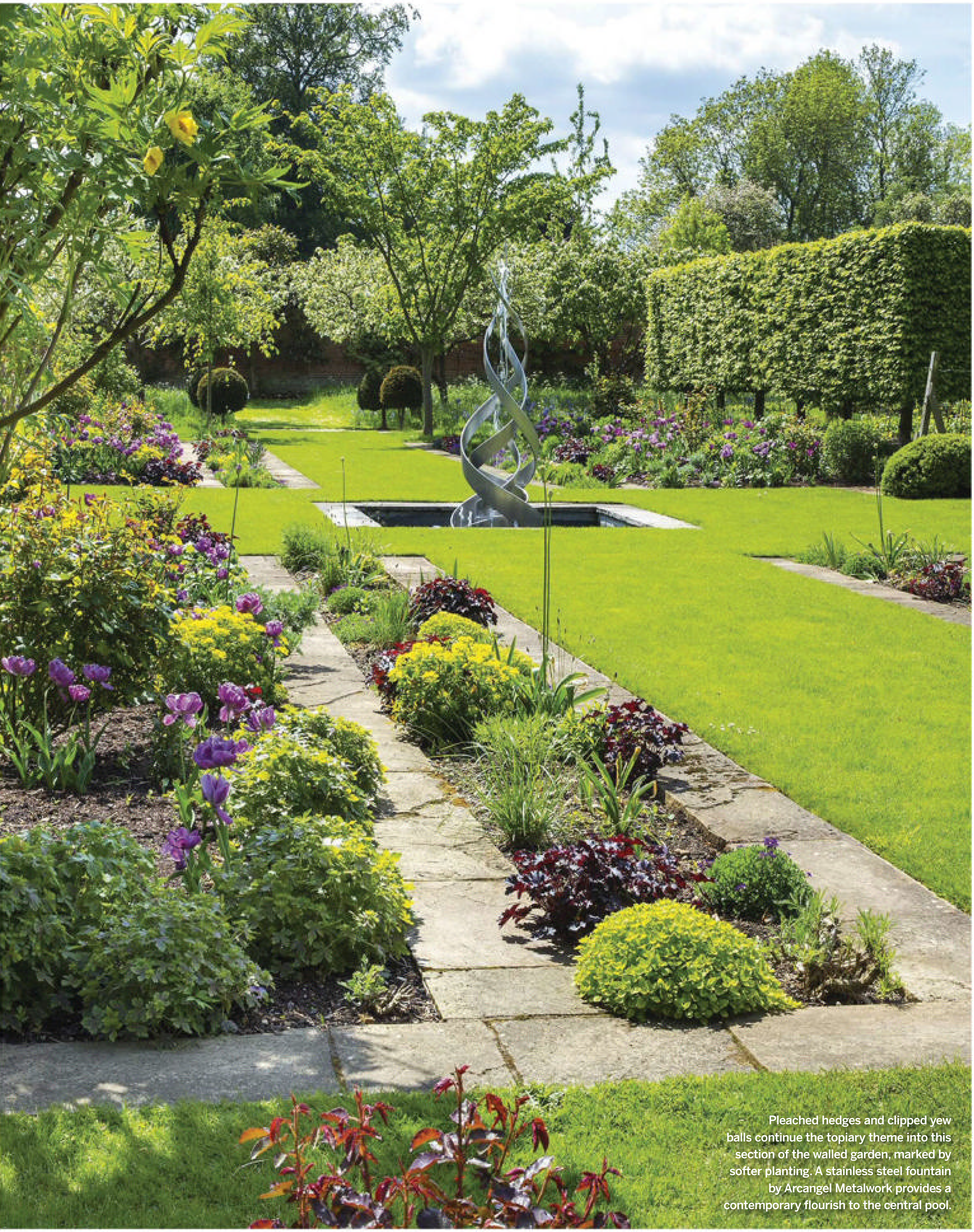


Orange 'Ballerina' tulips add a warm note to the formal box parterre – and a heady scent in spring.

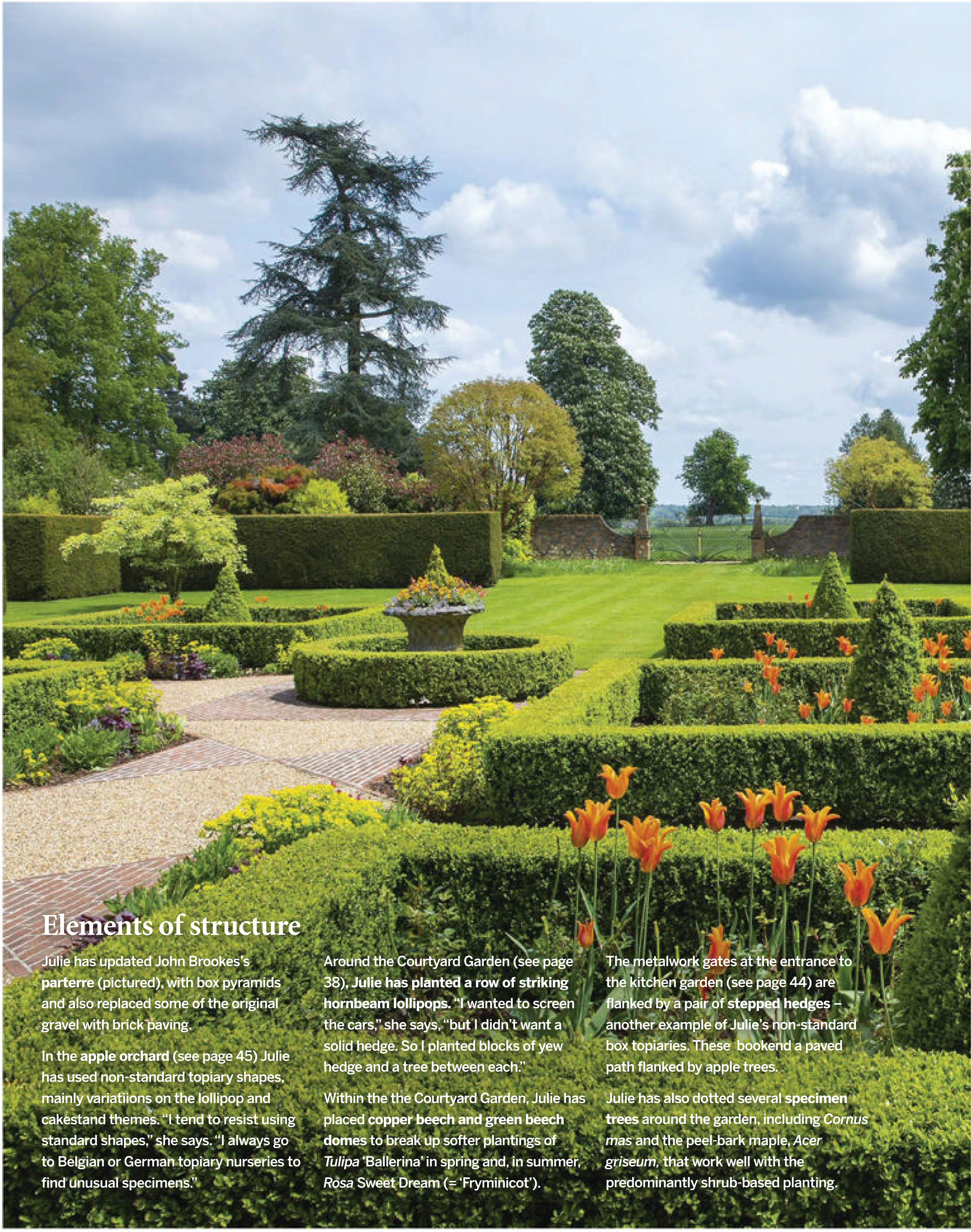
Specimen trees, such as this *Cornus* in the lawn near the new parking area, provide focal points throughout the garden.

A neoclassical pavilion that overlooks a pool to the south of the house, blends comfortably in its glade-like setting.





Pleached hedges and clipped yew balls continue the topiary theme into this section of the walled garden, marked by softer planting. A stainless steel fountain by Arcangel Metalwork provides a contemporary flourish to the central pool.



Elements of structure

Julie has updated John Brookes's **parterre** (pictured), with box pyramids and also replaced some of the original gravel with brick paving.

In the **apple orchard** (see page 45) Julie has used non-standard topiary shapes, mainly variatiions on the lollipop and cakestand themes. "I tend to resist using standard shapes," she says. "I always go to Belgian or German topiary nurseries to find unusual specimens."

Around the Courtyard Garden (see page 38), **Julie has planted a row of striking hornbeam lollipops.** "I wanted to screen the cars," she says, "but I didn't want a solid hedge. So I planted blocks of yew hedge and a tree between each."

Within the the Courtyard Garden, Julie has placed **copper beech and green beech domes** to break up softer plantings of *Tulipa* 'Ballerina' in spring and, in summer, *Rosa* Sweet Dream (= 'Fryminicot').

The metalwork gates at the entrance to the kitchen garden (see page 44) are flanked by a pair of **stepped hedges** – another example of Julie's non-standard box topiaries. These bookend a paved path flanked by apple trees.

Julie has also dotted several **specimen trees** around the garden, including *Cornus mas* and the peel-bark maple, *Acer griseum,* that work well with the predominantly shrub-based planting.

The first thing visitors see is the parterre that prefaces the delightfully ‘olde-worlde’ Tudor front of the house

▷ spirit with a long rectangular pool before it. Mature trees, including a fine *Liriodendron*, help to create a glade-like setting and prevent this from coming across as a 1980s-style accoutrement. Julie has added twin borders to flank the canal, with *Persicaria amplexicaulis* ‘Rosea’ and *Aster amellus* ‘Veilchenkönigin’ singing out at different seasons.

The west lawn is overlooked by the Queen Anne façade, where a small terrace is bordered by a low box hedge and pink dwarf rose, with *Choisya ternata* Sundance (= ‘Lich’), hebes, euphorbia and the tender *Dregea sinensis* growing against the house. This last shrub is one of the unusual plants that – along with specimen trees around the west lawn, such as *Quercus rubra* and various magnolias – are the legacy of its former owner Jacqueline Duncan, head of Inchbald School of Design.

A converted wooden barn to the northwest of the house has been dignified by a quartet of sentry hornbeam domes with clipped *Pittosporum* balls below. Around the adjacent swimming pool, several *Cornus mas* specimens announce herbaceous borders dominated by garnet penstemons, sedums, heucheras, lilacs and *Physocarpus opulifolius* Lady in Red (= ‘Tuilad’), while yew cubes lend the note of structural formality that is a constant in this garden.

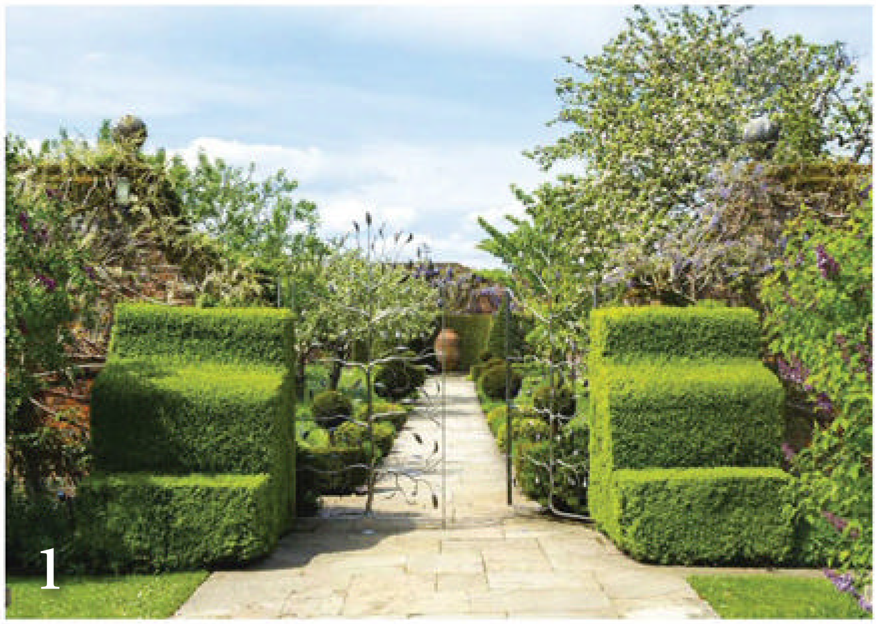
From here a door leads into the Courtyard Garden, informally named ‘the curvy path garden’, where hornbeam trees, yew blocks and domes of chestnut – both green and copper – create a dynamic and intriguing structure and a feeling of flow through the space. “I wanted to create a pleasant journey from the house to the walled garden and the stable yard,” explains Julie. “The owners walk through this several times a day.” Height is provided by groups of *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii*, while the planting moves ▷

Design features

1 The Pear Tree Gates to the walled garden, are one of several pairs of decorative gates in the garden that, along with statues and other work, were commissioned from Arcangel Metalwork (arcangelmetalwork.co.uk).

2 The aluminium conservatory was made to a bespoke design by Alitex (alitex.co.uk). It contains citrus plants and tender specimens, such as *Tibouchina urvilleana*. At the centre of the vegetable garden, the pool (just visible in the centre of the image) was inspired by a well Julie once saw in a German monastery. It was made by Access Garden Products of Northamptonshire (garden-products.co.uk).

3 Julie used contemporary Corten steel, for the edging against the raised beds in one section of the walled garden – "I thought it would not be good to be a slave to historical precedent throughout the garden," she says.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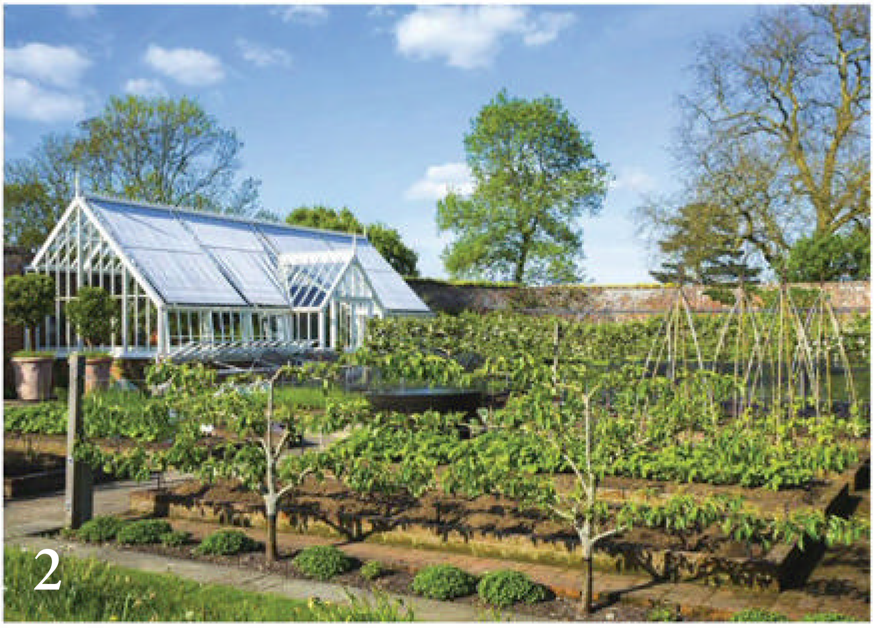
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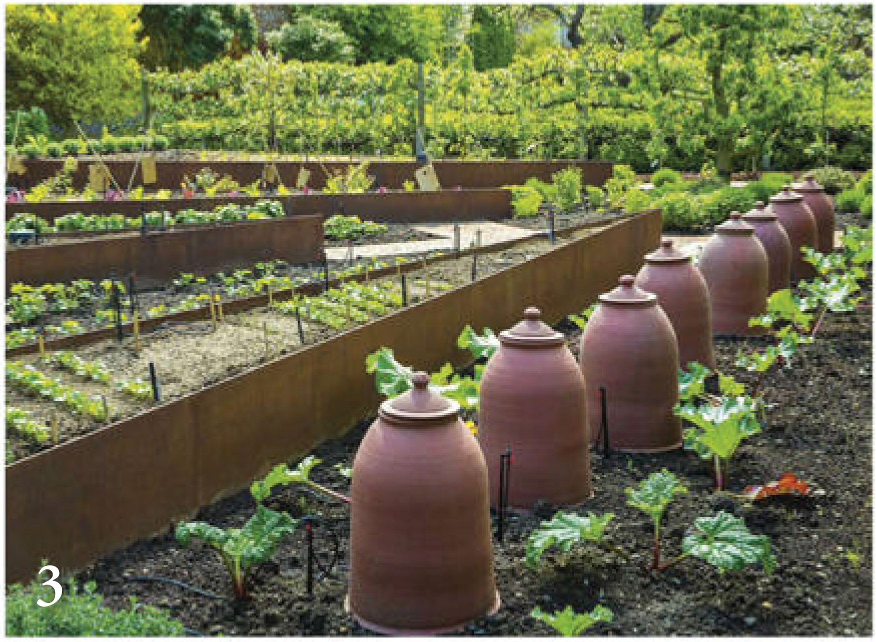
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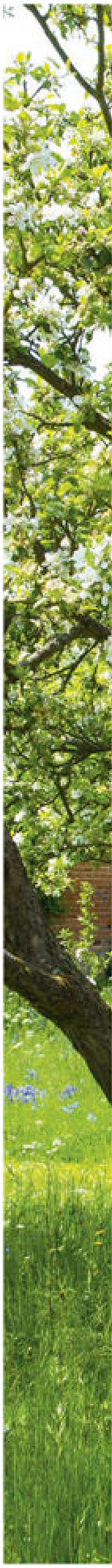


▷ from orange 'Ballerina' tulips and alliums in spring, through rudbeckia, echinacea, panicum and stipa grasses, to kniphofia, amsonia and *Euphorbia amygdaloides* 'Purpurea' later in the season.

The walled garden is announced by Julie's non-standard topiary in the apple orchard and allée. Spring bulbs abound beneath the apple trees, including camassias, tulips, narcissi and bluebells. Beyond, there are abundant quarters devoted to herbs, fruit and vegetables, divided by pleached hornbeam hedges. One distinctive feature is the many sitting places across the garden. This is a space designed to be enjoyed as well as worked.

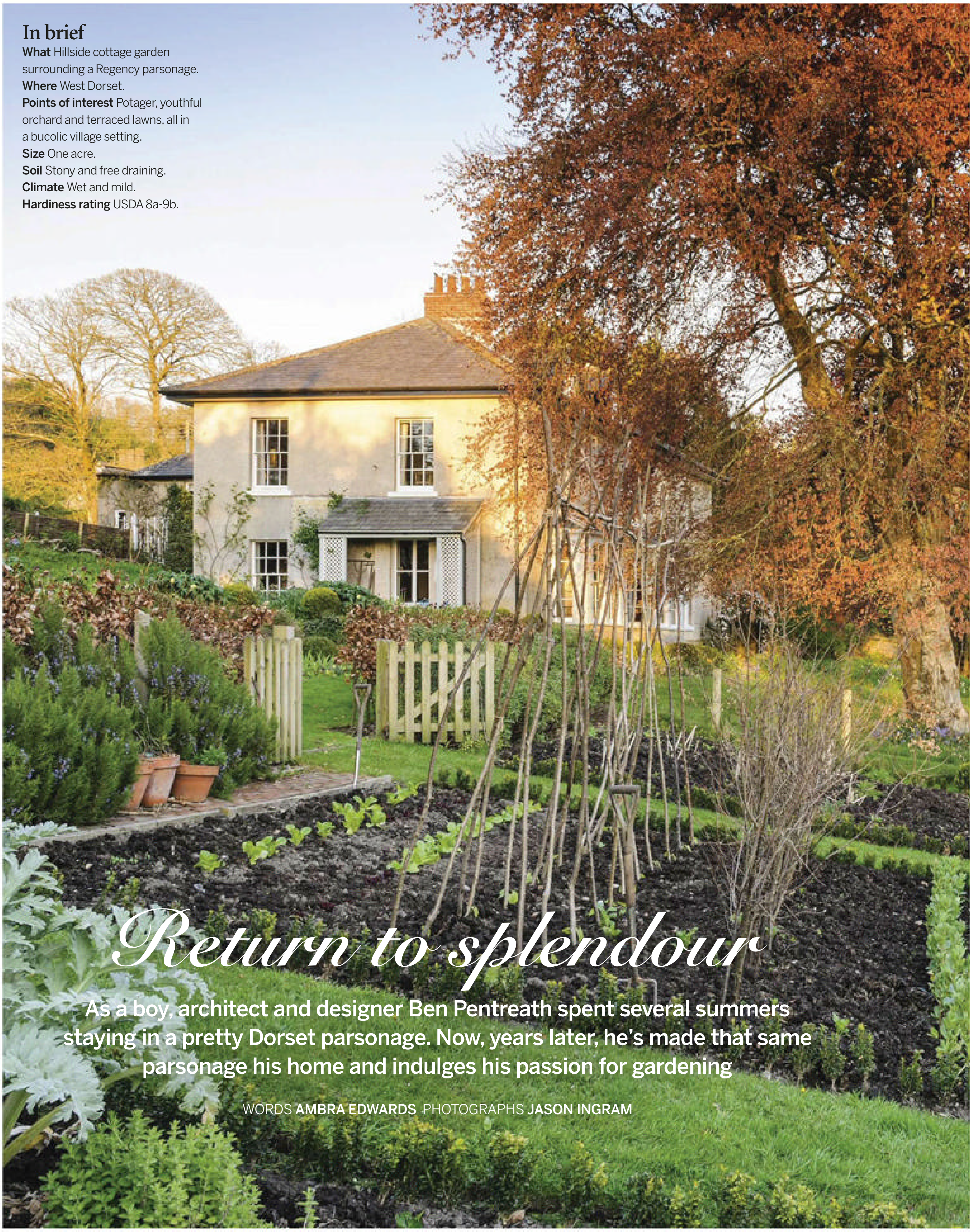
The exterior of the walled garden is the site of a long, shrub border, of interest in its own right, with *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle' and *Ilex crenata*, enlivened by daylilies and a host of other flowering plants. There is detail to be discovered throughout this garden, such as shade-loving plants and more topiary near the new parking area. For this is an intensely worked garden that never stands still. ☐

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address The Manor House, Ayot St Lawrence, Welwyn, Hertfordshire AL6 9BP.

Open 17 May, 11am-5pm, under the National Gardens Scheme (ngs.org.uk).

Spring flowers abound in the meadow grass beneath the mature apple trees. The informality of this orchard is playfully offset by the miniature lollipop yew topiary.



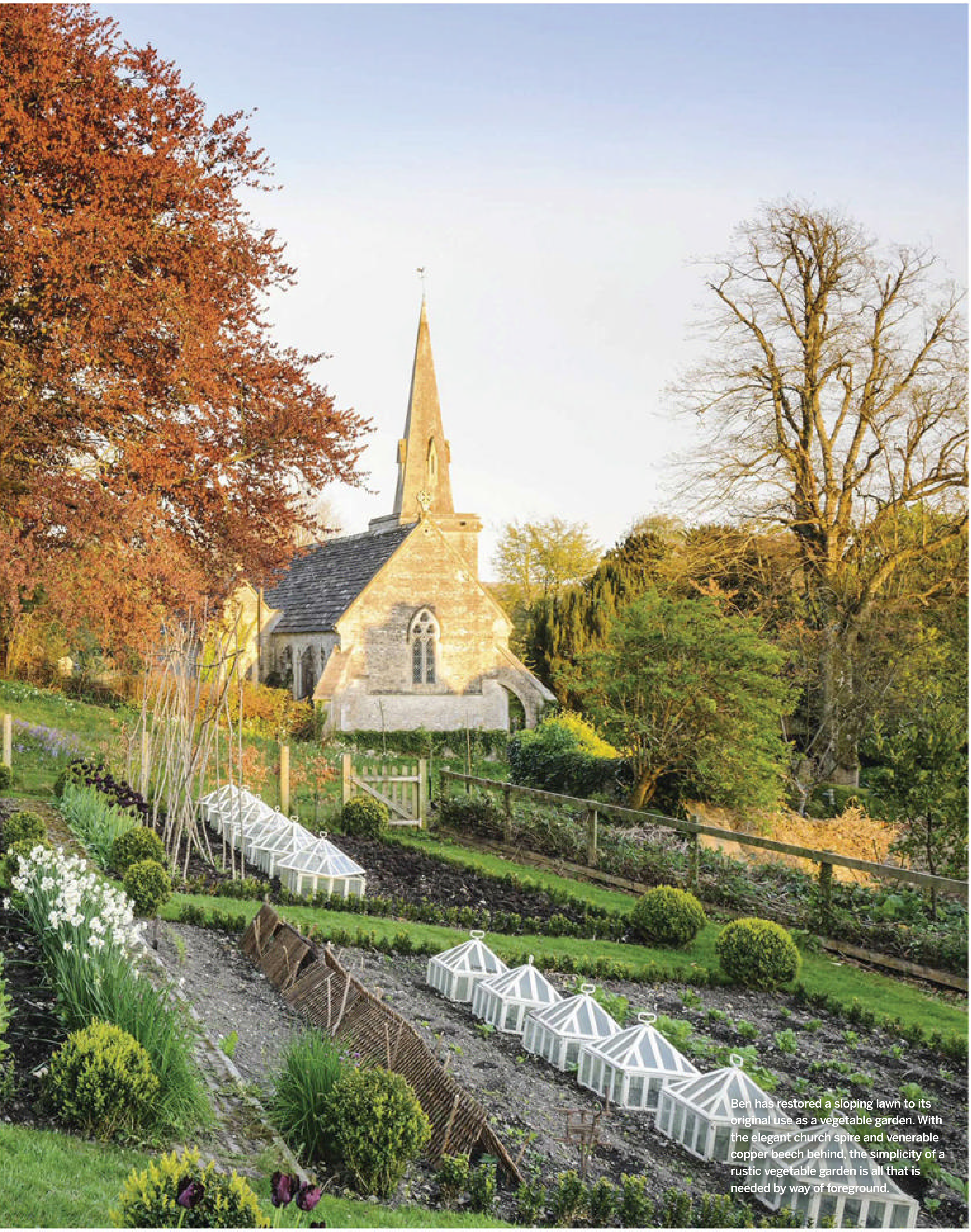
Return to splendour

As a boy, architect and designer Ben Pentreath spent several summers staying in a pretty Dorset parsonage. Now, years later, he's made that same parsonage his home and indulges his passion for gardening

WORDS **AMBRA EDWARDS** PHOTOGRAPHS **JASON INGRAM**

In brief

What Hillside cottage garden surrounding a Regency parsonage.
Where West Dorset.
Points of interest Potager, youthful orchard and terraced lawns, all in a bucolic village setting.
Size One acre.
Soil Stony and free draining.
Climate Wet and mild.
Hardiness rating USDA 8a-9b.



Ben has restored a sloping lawn to its original use as a vegetable garden. With the elegant church spire and venerable copper beech behind, the simplicity of a rustic vegetable garden is all that is needed by way of foreground.

> *“Spring is when you get all the joy and promise of the garden, with none of the drawbacks”*

For the past ten years, architect and designer Ben Pentreath has been working hard at Poundbury, the Prince of Wales’s extension to Dorset’s county town of Dorchester. But Ben’s connection with Dorset goes back much further than that.

He was born in Dorchester, brought up nearby, and as a schoolboy in the 1970s, would often stay at his best friend’s house in the far west of Dorset, in an idyllic estate village overlooking the Jurassic Coast. The roomy 19th-century parsonage with its acre of sloping land became a home-from-home; a place to picnic on the lawn, dangle daringly from trees and to slip through the gate into the adjoining churchyard for a spooky night’s camping among the mossy tombs.

Years later, Ben returned to the village and, finding the house of his boyhood untenanted, wondered if he might live there himself. Both house and garden were in need of a little loving. The house had stood empty for some while, and before that, had been a holiday home for a large London family for whom the garden was valued less as a horticultural hot spot than the perfect place for hide-and-seek for boys. But the infrastructure of the garden – the paths, the walls, the terraces – remained unaltered. A swing still hung from the old copper beech on the lawn. And the view – the graceful spire of the village church, the pillowy thatched roofs of nearby cottages and, above all, the great multi-coloured bank of trees rising up to shelter the valley from the south – was as beautiful as it had ever been. In 2005, Ben signed a long lease and set to work.

Ben was, he is the first to admit, somewhat out of practice at gardening. He had spent the past decade living in London and New York. “But before that I’d had a house with a garden in Norfolk, where I’d grown all my own veg. I was itching to start gardening again.”

He cleared away the overgrown shrubs to make room for new herbaceous borders. He put up a trelliswork porch on the western side of the house and draped a honeysuckle over it, to fill the air with fragrance in the late afternoon sun. (“Not that I ever get to sit down there,” grumbles Ben, “or only when friends come to stay.”) But the most exciting job was to lay out a new kitchen garden, on a sunny lawn below the house. It was the perfect spot – a gentle south-facing slope, beautifully sheltered from the fierce southwesterlies that can come roaring in from the sea, and beyond the heavy shade of the copper beech. He fenced securely against rabbits, and edged each bed with tiny sprigs of box (rabbits are reputed to dislike the smell), although the box ball at each corner suggests that the decorative effect was a higher priority than deterring furry marauders. Perennials were planted first – asparagus, artichokes and rhubarb; raspberries, rosemary and

▷

1 Formal box neatly surrounds borders of tulips on this small terrace to the the west of the house. It catches the evening sun and in summer is filled with scent of honeysuckle growing on the trelliswork porch.

2 Ben loves the sultry purple of ‘Queen of Night’ tulips.

3 Box balls bring structure to a simple herbaceous border below the house.

4 These daffodils, aptly named ‘Cheerfulness’, are grown for cutting in the potager.

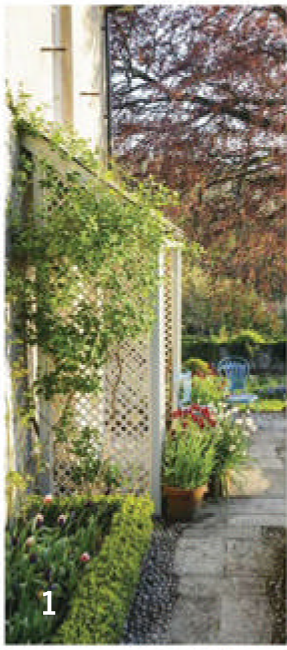
5 Simple spring blooms and vintage tools form a charming display in the kitchen yard.

6 Ben likes to collect traditional garden paraphernalia, such as these Victorian lantern cloches.

7 A pair of terracotta rhubarb forcers, which offer both beauty and utility.

8 The pale, fissured bark and luminous new leaves of the beech are superb in spring.

9 A floriferous *Clematis montana* scrambles over the arch to the kitchen yard.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Finishing touches

Ben’s is not the sort of vegetable plot where you will find things growing in old tractor tyres. Ben is an interior designer as well as an architect, and also has a shop. That objects are important to him is plain to see. Young courgette and tomato plants are cosseted under handsome Victorian lanterns. The rhubarb is blanched in proper terracotta forcers. The beans will make their way up staffs of rustic hazel rather than charmless bamboo canes. Even the string line is a little *objet d’art*, a trophy from kitchen gardening’s Edwardian heyday. More vintage bibelots are found in the kitchen yard, where pansies and old-fashioned primulas grow out of fat zinc wash tubs, and lovely old tools – sieves, watering cans, thermometers – are ranged around the walls.

In the ornamental garden, Ben eschews anything too showy: simple metalwork arches support heavy curtains of *Clematis montana*. The effect is of charm without clutter, which only serves to enhance the appeal of a garden that delights in its easy simplicity.

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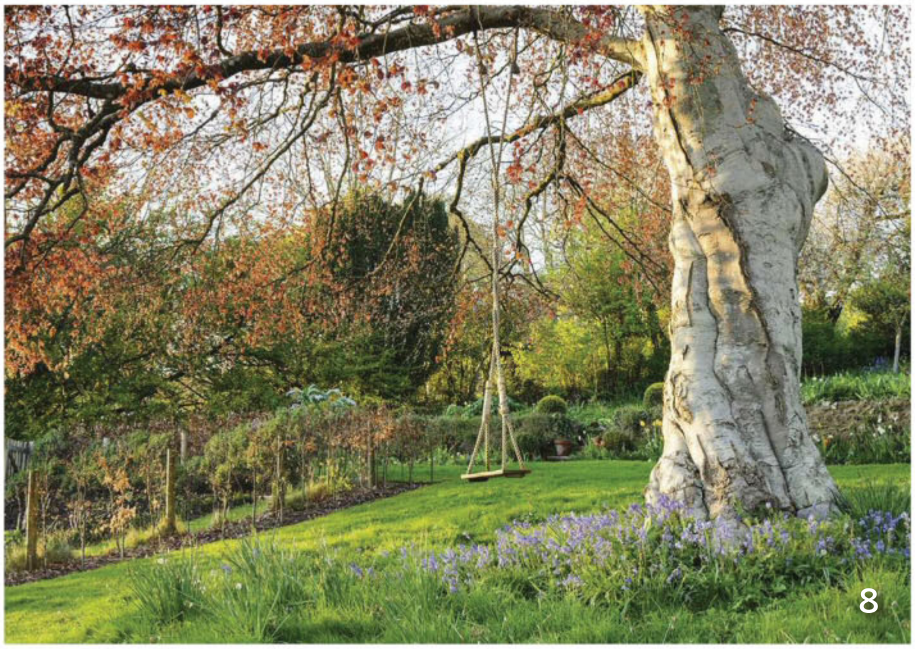
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Ben uses hazel, harvested from hedgerows, for his bean poles and pea sticks.

> *“Every year my neighbours tell me how good my sweet corn is. One year I’ll get back in time to taste it”*

▷ sage. Then came beans and peas and brassicas and salads, interspersed with rows and rows of flowers.

“To be honest, I don’t eat very much of it,” says Ben. “I grow my vegetables purely for aesthetic purposes. Every year I’m away in August, and my neighbours tell me how good my sweet corn is. One year I’ll get back in time to taste it.”

Everything in the potager grows like Topsy. Although the area was laid to lawn when Ben was a boy, it turns out there were vegetables here before. “I’d like to think it was all down to me,” says Ben, “but I suspect I’m reaping the benefit of a century of expert cultivation.”

The valley is beautiful at every time of year. But Ben always looks forward to the spring. “It’s when you get all the joy and promise of the garden, with none of the drawbacks.” The copper beech is still diaphanous – the new leaves vivid and translucent as stained glass. Later it will cast half the garden into shade.

The young fruit trees down by the churchyard wall are frothy with blossom. And the borders are brilliant with sky-blue brunneras and limy euphorbias, sunshine-yellow calendulas and, above all, masses and masses of tulips. “In summer, I always think sunflowers or dahlias are my favourite flowers; then in spring, I’m certain it’s tulips after all. I love the variety of them, but especially the broken tulips with their gorgeous flames of colour. And I like how they feel old and historical – they seem very at home in this garden.”

This spring, Ben’s lease has ten years left to run. Is he never troubled by the thought that all the effort, and the money, he is pouring in to this garden may be, in the end, for someone else’s benefit?

“Not really,” says Ben. “How many homeowners stay in the same place for 15 years? Besides, it’s giving me pleasure right now.” He could equally spend his money, he points out, on exotic holidays or swanky dinners – pleasures even more ephemeral. Gardening, he feels, has nothing to do with ownership, but everything to do with the joy of place-making, and the simple enjoyment of busying his hands in the soil. “Growing a bit too much veg is a harmless indulgence,” he suggests, “and a very pleasant way of wasting money.” □

8 of Ben’s favourite flowers and vegetables

1 Rembrandt tulip
I grow a mixture of Rembrandt tulips in many shades. I love their broken colouring, unfailingly beautiful in every combination.

2 Alpine auriculas
I got a job lot of mixed auriculas that arrived half dead in a cardboard box. But like all those old, cottage-garden plants, they are tough customers.

3 *Tulipa* ‘Spring Green’
The antithesis of the parrot tulip – so elegant and understated. A really fresh and uplifting border tulip. 60cm. AGM*. RHS H6, USDA 3a-9b†.

4 Artichoke
I grow more artichokes than I can ever eat – purely for their beauty. Nothing else has such architectural presence in the garden.

5 *Narcissus* ‘Cheerfulness’
I grow masses, so I can gather armfuls to bring into the house – the scent is so powerful, and they really live up to their name. 45cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

6 *Tulipa* ‘Prinses Irene’
The colouring is so vibrant on this tulip, with its flaming of pink fading out to yellow. It has impact without being brash. 45cm. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b.

7 Asparagus
I’ve no idea what variety I grow – but I can tell you I was picking it within two years and it’s absolutely delicious.

8 *Tulipa* ‘Black Parrot’
I love the weirdness of parrot tulips, and ‘Black Parrot’ is the most spectacular of the lot, making a sensational cut flower. 30cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 4a-9b.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

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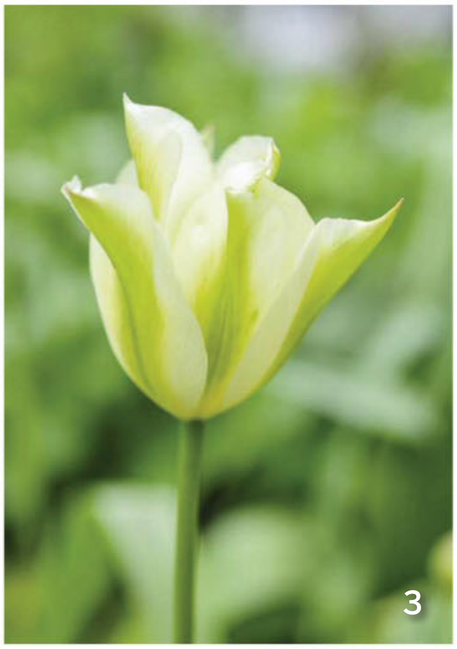
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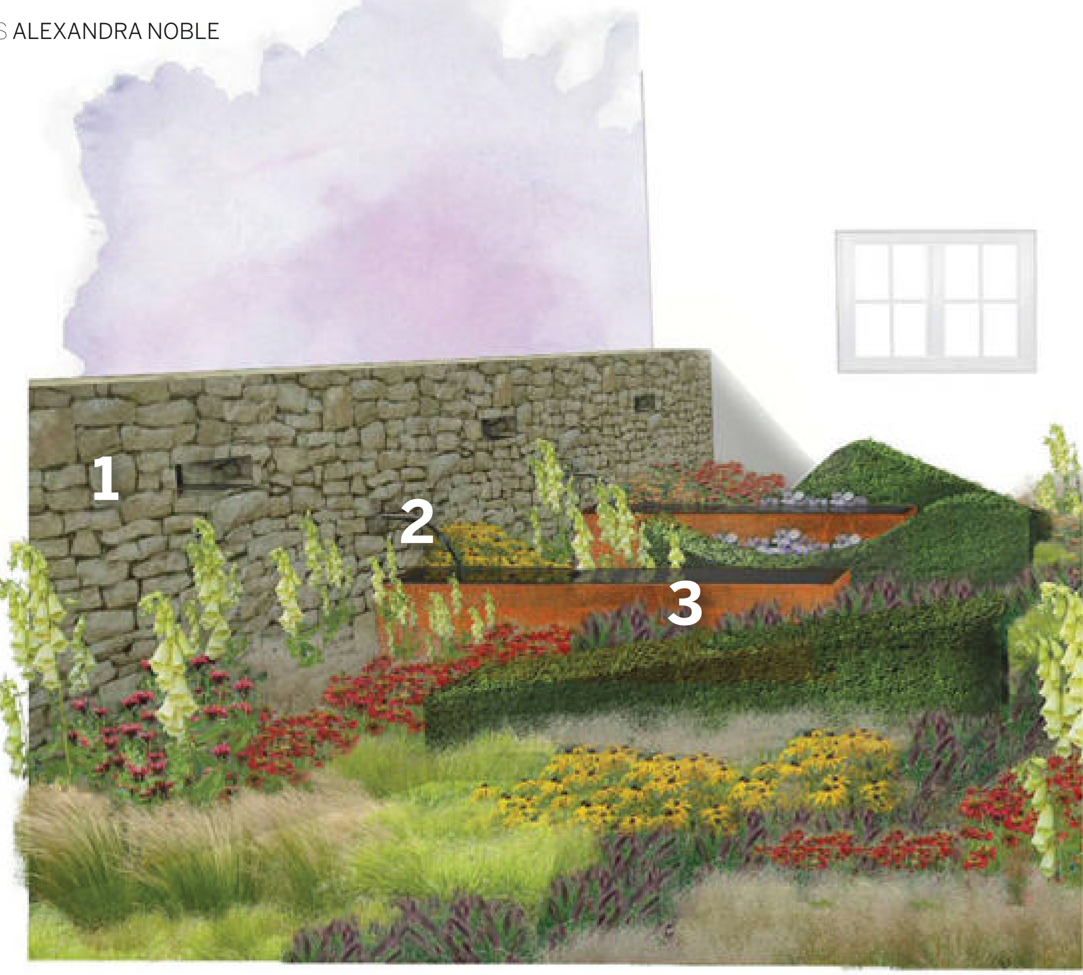
First impressions

Our front gardens are the space we show to the world, so why do we so often give them little attention? Landscape designer Anoushka Feiler offers three designs that are sure to impress

WORDS ANOUSHKA FEILER ILLUSTRATIONS ALEXANDRA NOBLE

Anoushka Feiler is a landscape and garden designer. She has won numerous RHS awards including Best in Show, Gold and Peoples' Choice.



A low-maintenance show stopper

No garden is ever entirely maintenance free, but there are a few tricks you can use to keep maintenance to a minimum and still create an impressive garden.

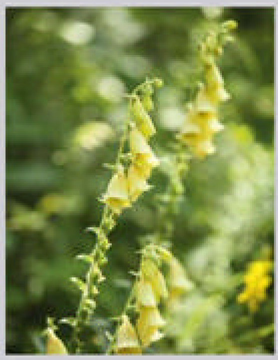
The first trick is to choose plants that don't require too much input. This garden uses evergreen plants that look good all year, with a mix of pretty, wild-style flowers and grasses that won't require too much work. With a good clear up at the start of both spring and autumn, along with mulching and feeding, you can get away with the odd weeding and deadheading session, and once the garden is established, plants will help suppress weeds.

Another trick is to choose your hard-landscaping materials carefully. Here we've used a resin-bound gravel for the pathway. This gives the soft impression of a gravel pathway but is permeable, easy to sweep, comfortable to walk on and roll bins over – and you won't be constantly bringing bits of it into the house. The pathway is punctuated by large pavers made of Corten steel, which was developed to eliminate the need for painting. Instead it forms a stable, rust-like appearance.

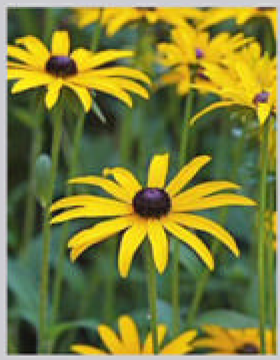
Water features do not have to be too work heavy. The two here are Corten steel troughs and should only require the occasional skim and a bromide tablet dropped in the water every now and again if algae appears. I always recommend installing an automatic water top-up, which means you don't even have to compensate for water evaporating (it is always surprising how much does evaporate).

Key plants for a low-maintenance garden

Sporobolus heterolepis
A handsome prairie grass that tuns reddish in autumn and stands well into winter if it's not too wet. Has a softening effect when planted alongside perennials. 90cm. USDA 3a-9b†.

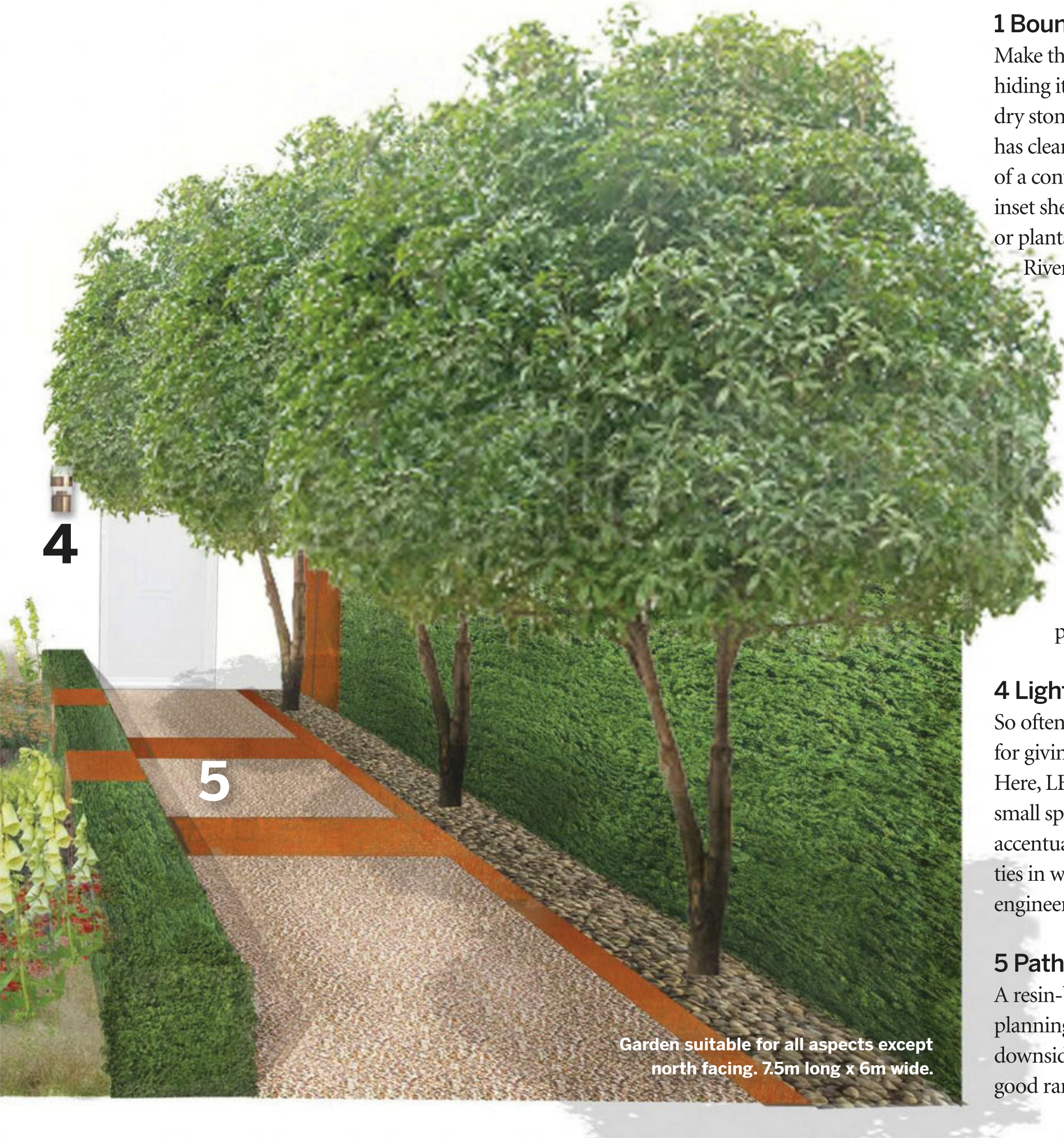


Digitalis grandiflora
Lovely vertical accents add height and create focal points within the planting. Its colour tones well with the hard-landscaping elements. 90cm. AGM*. RHS H5, USDA 3a-8b.



***Rudbeckia fulgida* var. *sullivantii* 'Goldsturm'**
A tough and reliable rudbeckia with stunning blooms that don't need dividing too often and shouldn't need staking. 60cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 3a-9b.

PLANT PORTRAITS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: GW / BOTANIC IMAGES INC; VLADIMIR CUVALA / ALAMY; DAVE ZUBRASK / ALAMY; GAP PHOTOS: JOHN MARTIN / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES



Garden suitable for all aspects except north facing. 7.5m long x 6m wide.

1 Boundary

Make the boundary a feature rather than hiding it. Here we've created the effect of a dry stone wall, but by laying the stone so it has clean straight edges, we've given it more of a contemporary feel. We've also added inset shelves that can be used for candles or plants. For beautiful stonework try Riverdale Stone (riverdalestone.co.uk).

2 Water features

Water features have a calming effect, create an interesting focal point and attract wildlife.

3 Materials

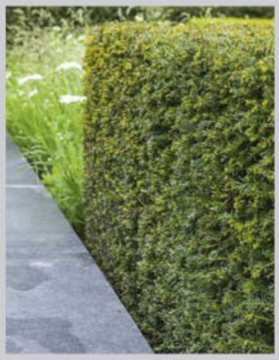
Restrict how many materials and colours you use. Here, the colour of the Corten steel water feature, pavers and pathway edging is picked up in the planting palette.

4 Lighting

So often overlooked, lighting is important for giving a garden the wow factor at night. Here, LED, warm-white, strip lighting and small spike lights have been used to softly accentuate key features. A copper wall light ties in with the overall scheme. Online store engineeringwithlight.com has great fittings.

5 Pathway

A resin-bound path complies with current planning rules and overcomes many of the downsides to gravel pathways. You can find a good range at SureSet Paving (sureset.co.uk).



Taxus baccata

A good alternative to *Buxus sempervirens*. It only needs a trim in late summer and if you make a mistake, it's very forgiving. 12m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 5b-8b.

Osmanthus* x *burkwoodii

This evergreen shrub can be grown as a multi-stem umbrella tree. It is autumn flowering and has the most beautiful scent – I wish I could bottle it. 4.7m. AGM. RHS H5, USDA 6b-10b.

Other planting options

Grasses

- *Pennisetum alopecuroides* 'Hameln'
Doesn't look much in spring but in late summer will reward you with pinkish, brush-like flowers. 1.2m.
- *Sesleria autumnalis*
A valuable semi-evergreen grass that looks good for most of the year. 1m.
- *Stipa lessingiana*
Grass with creamy accent. Similar to *Stipa tenuissima* but longer lived. 1m.

Perennials

- *Achillea* 'Terracotta'
Lovely colour that looks good planted en masse, but I prefer muddling it in with grasses. 80cm.
- *Aquilegia vulgaris* var. *stellata* 'Nora Barlow'
Beautiful, pink, cheerful flowers. It does have a tendency to self-seed so keep an eye out. 90cm.
- *Helenium* 'Rubinzwerg'
Its attractive, burnt-red flowers are much loved by butterflies. 90cm. AGM.
- *Monarda* 'Squaw'
Has fabulous, bright-red flowers. 1m. AGM.
- *Salvia* x *sylvestris* 'Mainacht'
Deep-purple flowers over several weeks. Deadhead to promote repeat flowering. 75cm. AGM.
- *Verbascum* 'Helen Johnson'
Beautiful, romantic spires in summer, the plant will die after flowering but should self-seed. 90cm.

Shrubs and hedging

- *Buxus sempervirens*
Evergreen structure, happiest in shade. It is relatively easy to grow and maintain. 5m.
- *Ligustrum lucidum*
One of the most attractive evergreen hedging options. 7m. AGM.

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

An eco-friendly, wildlife garden

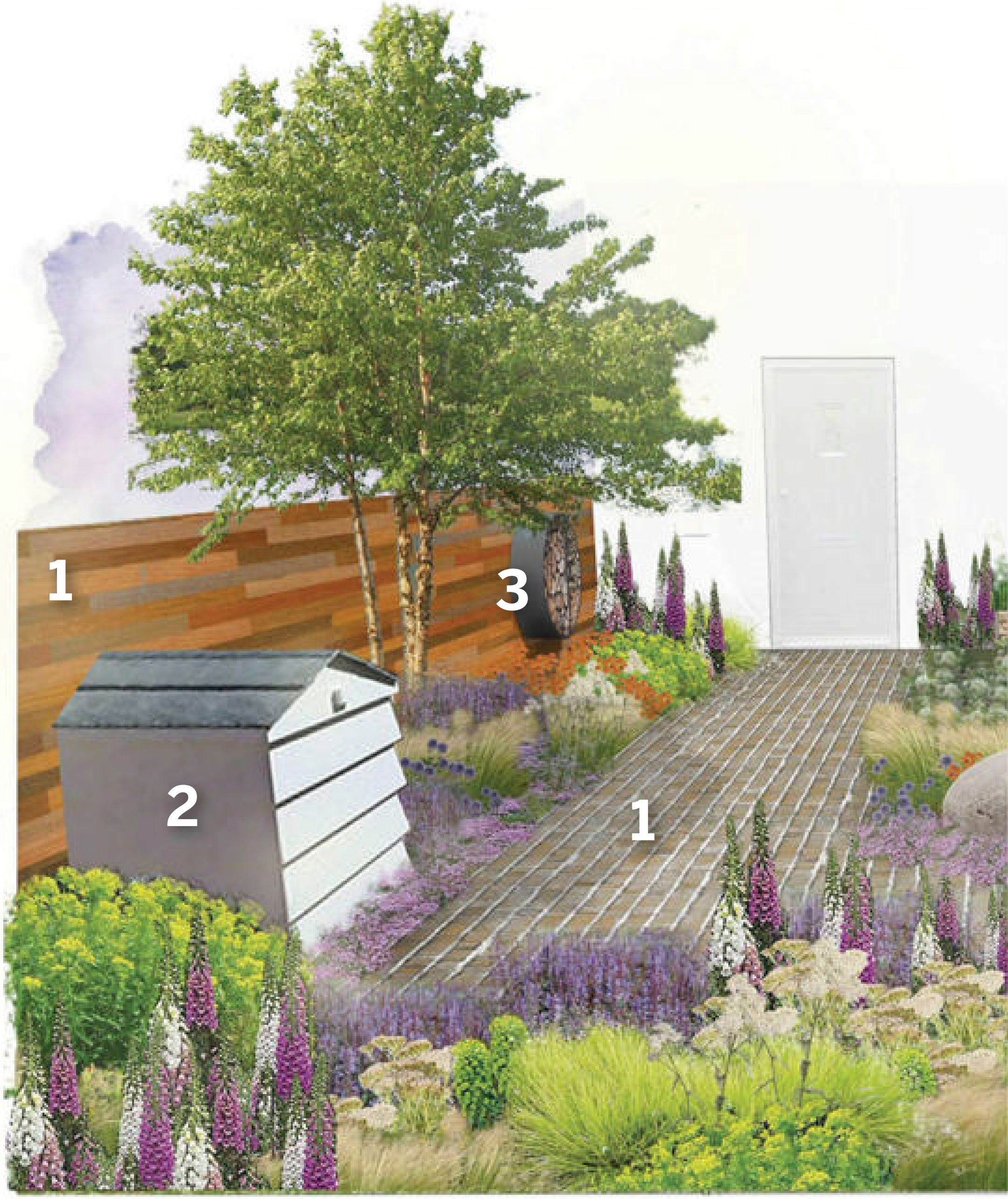
It has been said that without bees we would struggle to feed much of the world's population, so encouraging bees and other pollinators into our the gardens is not just lovely to see, it is important for our wider existence. There are many ways you can do this and I have incorporated a few different ideas, as well as using more environmentally sustainable materials, in this design.

New planning guidance for England (Scotland and Wales have similar schemes), promotes the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) for new and replacement paving in front gardens. This means that any hard surface of more than five square metres won't need planning permission if it is either permeable, or has a drainage system that ensures rainwater run-off goes into the ground on the property, rather than into the public drainage system.

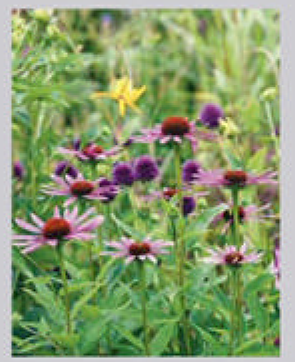
This garden works creatively with the rainwater harvested from the roof. It is a rain garden, whereby the rainwater falling on the property soaks into the ground as it would naturally do if there were no hard landscaping. Rainwater is redirected down a copper rain chain into a pond. Excess water flows out of the pond via a pretty waterfall on to a cobbled pathway and then into a swale. A swale is an elongated, curving shallow area in the ground, which carries and holds rainwater while it soaks into the soil. Marginal and water-loving plants are planted within the swale and pond, creating a valuable wildlife habitat.

The hard landscaping elements of the garden are largely made from reclaimed materials, including wood and stone, which is more eco-friendly than using new materials. The garden pathway is created from reclaimed bricks and laid so that rainwater is directed into the soft planting areas.

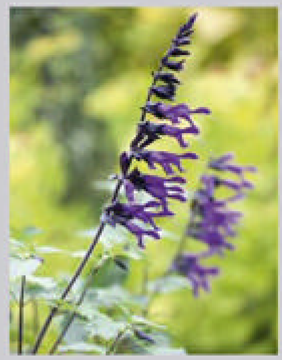
To break up the planting, we've created natural-looking focal points using rocks. The fence is made from reclaimed wood panels laid horizontally to create a varied patina of wood colours. An easy-to-access, bin-storage cupboard, in the same reclaimed wood as the fence, features a wild-flower turf roof. There's also a beehive-shaped composter for organic waste and a sculptural, circular shelf on the fence in which to store wood. A pretty cobbled area in front of the pond, features a cantilevered wooden seat, where you can sit and simply enjoy the hum of wildlife.



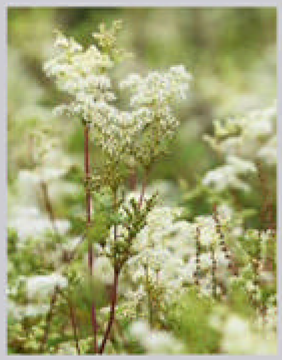
Key plants for an eco-friendly, wildlife garden



***Echinacea purpurea* 'Fatal Attraction'**
The fabulous daisy-like flowers look beautiful even before they burst into bloom. What's more, butterflies, bees and birds are attracted to them. 80cm.

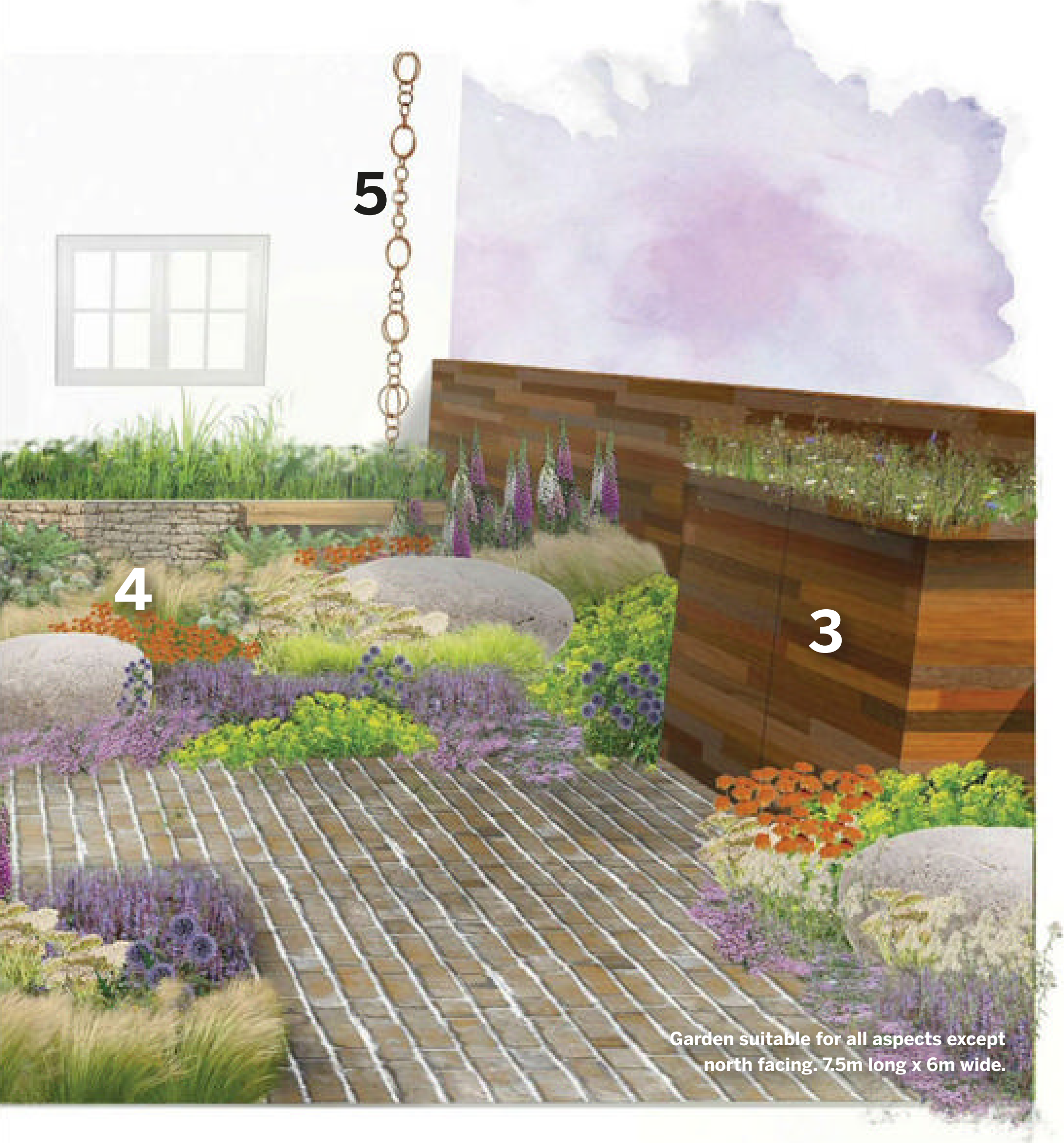


***Salvia* 'Amistad'**
This is a new cultivar with a long flowering period from May to October. It is drought tolerant and bees love it. Plant in drifts alongside bright greens. Also looks good in pots. 1.2m.



Filipendula ulmaria
This native meadowsweet has creamy, fluffy flower heads and is easy to grow. It's often seen growing on the banks of streams and is ideal for boggy areas of the garden. 90cm. USDA 3a-9b.

PLANT PORTRAITS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: ANDREA JONES IMAGES / ALAMY; L Z EVERY / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES; DOM GREVES / ALAMY; ALAN BEAUMONT / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES; ROB WHITWORTH GARDEN PHOTOGRAPHY / ALAMY



Garden suitable for all aspects except north facing. 7.5m long x 6m wide.

1 Reclaimed materials

Installing a pretty fence and path using reclaimed wood and brick creates a wonderful structure for the planting. Laying the planks horizontally gives a more contemporary feel. Try your local reclamation yard for materials.

2 Composter

Composters can look good. This beehive-shaped composter fits with the garden scheme and is a great way to recycle your organic waste and fertilise the garden. For a similar composter try Original Organics (originalorganics.co.uk).

3 Storage

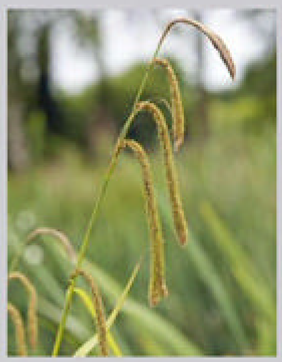
Here the log store has been designed to be a sculptural feature in its own right. You can also create a statement storage cupboard for your bins by using reclaimed materials and adding a wild-flower turf roof. Source turf from Wildflower Turf (wildflowerturf.co.uk).

4 Swale

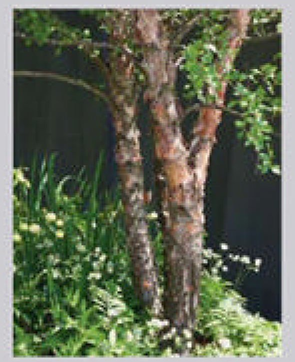
A curving depression in the main planting area holds excess rainwater and allows it to drain into the ground. It effectively turns your garden into a rain garden.

5 Rain chain and pond

This copper rain chain is an attractive alternative to a plastic drainpipe. As it weathers over time, the patina changes, and it channels rainwater into the pond, creating a lovely habitat for wildlife.



Carex pendula
A native, evergreen sedge with arching, slender flower spikes that will help give a naturalistic look to the swale. Prefers heavy clay soils and can be a bit thuggish. 1.5m. USDA 5a-9b.



Betula nigra
More commonly known as river birch, this tree is wonderfully suited to a rain garden. Its peeling bark starts reddish-brown then turns increasingly dark. 12m. USDA 4a-9b.

Other planting options

Climbers

- *Clematis* 'Freda'
Pretty pink flowers in May and June and attractive bronze foliage. 5m. AGM.
- *Clematis* 'Warszawska Nike'
Rich velvety purple flowers from July to September. If you plant it alongside 'Freda' you'll enjoy a much longer flowering period. 3m. AGM.

Grasses

- *Carex elata* 'Aurea'
A low, mound-forming sedge that's happy in moist soil. Semi-evergreen and a real brightener. 70cm. AGM.
- *Deschampsia cespitosa* 'Goldschleier'
A clump-forming grass with lovely plumes of golden flowers in summer. 45cm.
- *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Zebrinus'
This stripy grass is a real eye catcher. 1.2m. AGM.

Perennials

- *Achillea* 'Summerwine'
Provides wonderful shapes and colour mixed in with grasses. 75cm. AGM.
- *Allium cernuum* 'Hidcote'
Very pretty, pendulous pink flower heads. Makes a great cut flower too. 50cm. AGM.
- *Echinops ritro* subsp. *ruthenicus*
Vibrant blue globes, loved by bees, look great next to silver-grey plants. 1m. AGM.
- *Eupatorium cannabinum*
One of the best plants to grow for butterflies. 1.2m.
- *Euphorbia palustris*
Lovely bright-green leaves will tolerate heavier soils more than most other euphorbias. 90cm. AGM.

Shrubs

- *Cornus mas*
It flowers yellow in February and its foliage has a lovely purple tint in autumn. 5m.

A sculptural shade garden

I know of several people who despair of the fact they have a shady front garden. Yet shade-loving plants are so textural and, to put it simply, 'lush'. In this garden the aim is to create a beautiful sculptural garden that draws your attention to the plants.

The basis for the design is gravel laid on either a weed-suppressant membrane or a honeycomb system – this also stabilises the gravel underfoot and stops it moving around. In a north-facing garden I would opt for a lighter, creamy yellow gravel that will brighten the space more than grey.

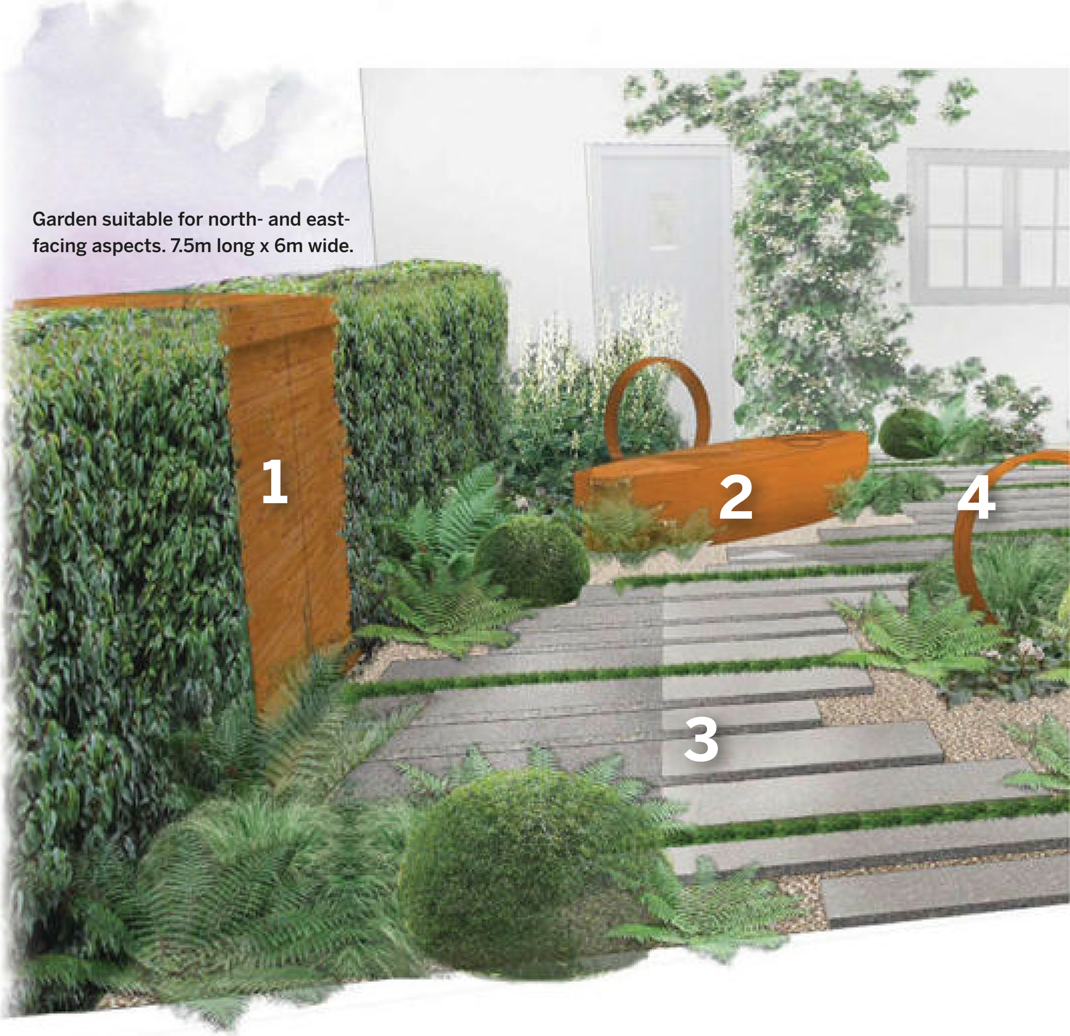
Among the gravel, we've planted a strong architectural backbone made up of evergreen ferns, such as *Polystichum polyblepharum*, grasses, including *Anemanthele lessoniana*, and sculptural shrubs, such as *Buxus sempervirens*. The creamy *Aconitum* 'Ivorine' and a pretty climber, *Schizophragma hydrangeoides*, on the wall by the front door, provide seasonal highlights.

Leading you to the front door, a pathway, made of long pavers of varying lengths, cuts a gentle, pleasing curve – based on Hogarth's line of beauty – through the garden. These pavers have a riven surface to help grip as north-facing garden surfaces are prone to algae. Occasionally, neat lines of *Ophiopogon japonicus* 'Minor' fill the gap in the paving and lead the eye to a cluster of planting.

Boundaries are marked by a hedge of *Prunus lusitanica*. This can be pruned into a neat shape, but because the texture of its leaves is not too tight or precise, it has a relaxed, informal feel. The hedge also helps to hide a storage cupboard, where unsightly bins can be kept out of sight but close to the road to allow for easy access.

A specimen tree, *Parrotia persica*, provides a distant focal point from the window. It can be pruned to keep it from getting too large, and has a beautiful autumn display with leaves turning yellow, red and purple. In late winter and early spring it also provides abundant red flowers. Here it has been underplanted with a simple swathe of *Hakonechloa macra*, which provides a wonderful foliage effect.

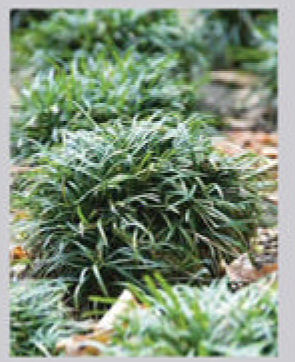
To finish the design we've placed three Corten steel rings among the planting to create simple sculptural features that will draw the eye and frame the planting. A wooden bench, marked with a similar laser-cut ring pattern, provides a place to sit and pause awhile across from a calming water bowl.



Garden suitable for north- and east-facing aspects. 7.5m long x 6m wide.

Key plants for a sculptural shade garden

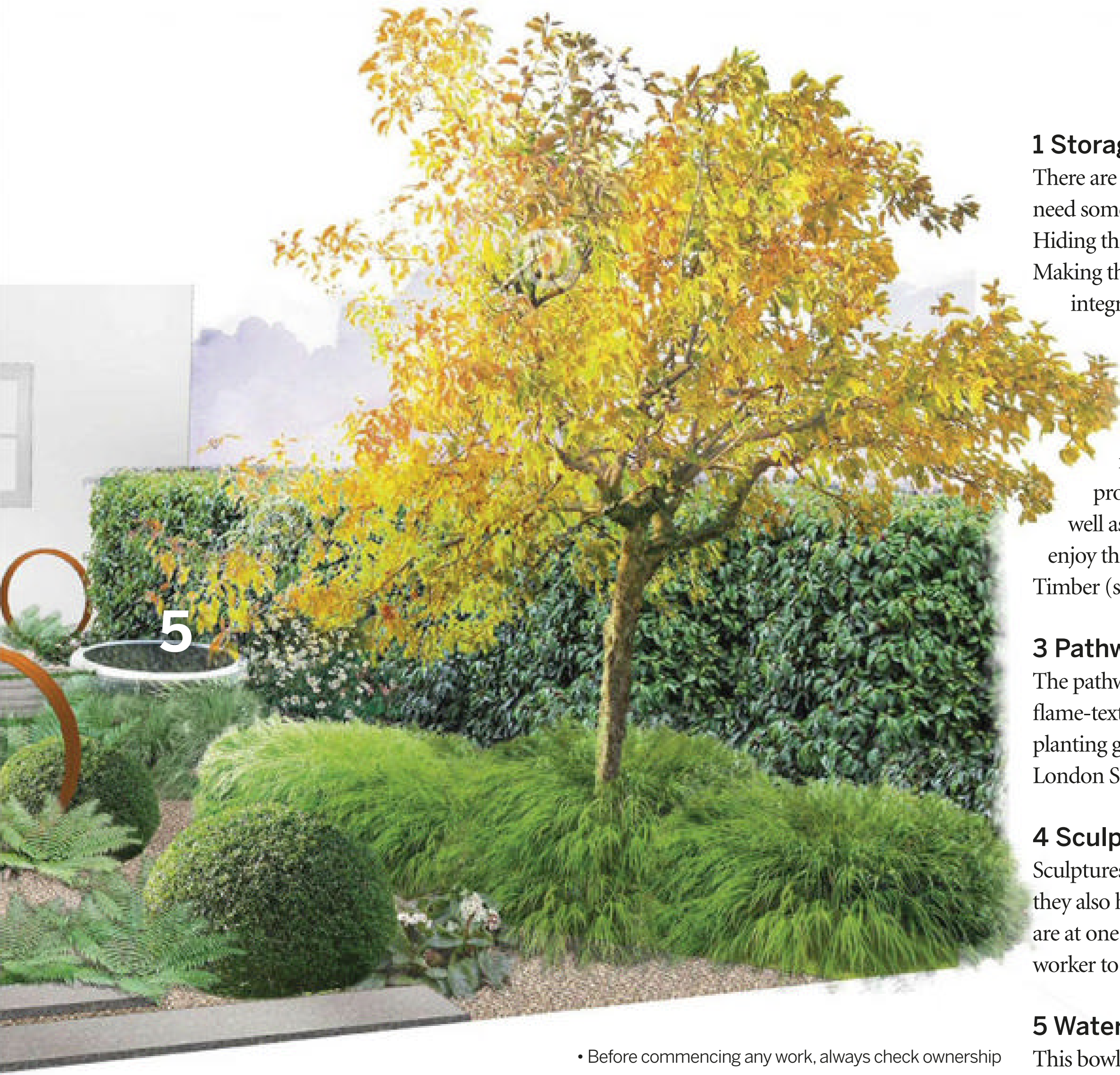
Polystichum polyblepharum
One of my favourite ferns for a shady spot. It adds a beautiful 'tassel' texture and has interest most of the year. Best in a moist, shady spot. 80cm. AGM. RHS H7, USDA 5b-9b.



***Ophiopogon japonicus* 'Minor'**
An evergreen perennial that looks like a grass and tolerates most situations. It is a great little ground-cover plant and, if planted in drifts, will create a bold statement. 10cm.

***Aconitum* 'Ivorine'**
This early-flowering monkshood looks lovely with dome-shaped topiary and textural ferns. It is a great brightener for a shady spot, but poisonous so wear gloves. 75cm. USDA 2a-8b.

PLANT PORTRAITS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: MAP / NATHALIE PASQUEL / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES; GAP PHOTOS / VISIONS; LEE THOMAS / GARDEN WORLD IMAGES; ANDREA JONES IMAGES / ALAMY; GAP PHOTOS / ELKE BORKOWSKI



1 Storage

There are few front gardens that do not need somewhere to store bins or logs. Hiding them away smartens everything up. Making the store the same height as the hedge integrates it with the overall design.

2 Seating

A sculptural bench made out of a wood, such as cedar, requires little maintenance and provides another focal point – as well as somewhere for you to sit and enjoy the garden. For cedar try Silva Timber (silvatimber.co.uk).

3 Pathway

The pathway of granite strip pavers with a flame-textured surface is laid with gravel and planting gaps. For stone paving options try London Stone (londonstone.co.uk).

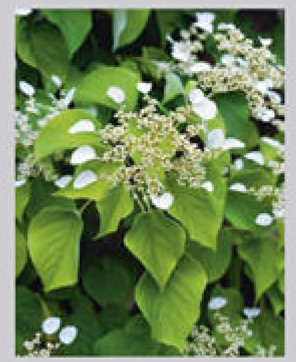
4 Sculpture

Sculptures can create focal points and here they also help frame the planting so they are at one with each other. Get a local metal worker to make something bespoke for you.

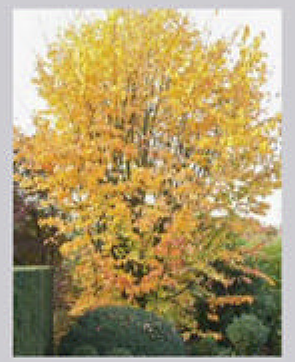
5 Water bowl

This bowl not only adds a lovely calming feel, it provides water for the birds. Stunning concrete bowls and planters can be sourced from Urbis Design (urbisdesign.co.uk).

- Before commencing any work, always check ownership of boundaries to avoid neighbour disputes and unpleasant fees. It is always worth checking with your Local Planning Authority before commencing work to ensure you do not need permission for any of your plans.



***Schizophragma hydrangeoides* var. *concolor* 'Moonlight'**
With its lovely, hydrangea-like flower heads in midsummer, this deciduous climber is great for covering a less-than-attractive wall. 7m. AGM. RHS H5.



Parrotia persica
One of my favourite trees for autumn colour. Its leaves turn yellow through to orange and then – for a final hurrah – fiery red. Likes a sunny or partially shady spot. 9m. USDA 4a-8b.

Other planting options

Ferns

- *Asplenium scolopendrium*
An evergreen fern with tongue-like fronds, more commonly known as hart's tongue. 60cm. AGM.
- *Dryopteris affinis* 'Cristata'
A semi-evergreen fern that doesn't mind being left to its own devices. 90cm. AGM.

Grasses

- *Anemanthele lessoniana*
This colourful, evergreen grass is happy in sun or shade. 1m. AGM.
- *Hakonechloa macra*
Best planted en masse, this semi-evergreen grass will create an emerald green carpet. 35cm. AGM.
- *Sesleria autumnalis*
A great grass that is tolerant of many soil types and positions. 60cm.

Perennials

- *Digitalis purpurea* f. *albiflora*
A favourite of the celebrated gardener Gertrude Jekyll. Its tall, white spires look simply elegant in June. 1.8m. AGM.
- *Geranium macrorrhizum* 'White-Ness'
Semi-evergreen and easy to grow with a long flowering season. 30cm. AGM.
- *Soleirolia soleirolii*
An alternative ground hugger to *Ophiopogon japonicus* 'Minor', although it can spread where it is not wanted. 10cm.

Shrubs and hedging

- *Prunus lusitanica*
Its dark, glossy leaves are evergreen and ideal for hedging. 20m. AGM.

Tree

- *Acer griseum*
A slow-growing tree with beautiful bark and rich autumn colour. Perfect for a small garden. 10m. AGM.

Japanese cherries

Spring in Japan is dominated by clouds of cherry blossom, justifiably so as these ornamental trees are one of the delights of spring and a wonderful addition to even a small garden

WORDS **VAL BOURNE** PHOTOGRAPHS **LYNN KEDDIE**

In brief

What 18 species and natural hybrids. of ornamental cherry native to Japan. Many of these species are associated with specific areas within Japan, for example the Fuji cherry of central Honshu.

Origins Their parentage is often unknown and complex, but these highly ornamental trees were originally found naturally and then propagated and grown in temple and castle gardens.

Season Spring-flowering blossom, generally between March and April, varying between heavy-skirted double and simple, single flowers.

Size Ranges from almost shrubby, through to small trees and upwards. Shape also varies and can be columnar, spreading or weeping.

Conditions A sheltered sunny position in good garden soil is best. If winter drainage is a problem, plant on a slope.

***Prunus* 'Takasago'**
'Takasago' refers to a song associated with an ancient Japanese card game. The abundant pink blossom, held in clusters of three to six flowers, appears in April against young bronzed foliage on a slow-growing tree. 3m.

Val Bourne is a garden writer and lecturer, and judges plant trials at RHS Wisley.

There is nothing quite as uplifting as a branch of blossom silhouetted against a spring sky. Japanese cherries, known in Japan as *sakura*, are among the most beautiful of blossom-bearing trees although they bear no fruit to speak of. The Japanese celebrate the arrival of the blossom every year with a blossom festival or *sakura matsuri*. Every year many make pilgrimages to iconic trees, planted in famous temple gardens or besides ancient castles, and picnic beneath them to view their blossom – a tradition known as *hanami*. Mount Yoshino is the oldest *hanami* site, and one of the most popular, with more than 30,000 trees that attract thousands of visitors every year.

Not surprisingly, the flowering cherry is Japan's national flower and every year the Japanese eagerly follow the advance of cherry blossom from south to north in a special forecast, known as the *sakura zensen*. If you're prepared to travel the length of the country you can witness blossom from January until May, or even June, thanks to Japan's varied climate. In Matsuyama on Shikoku Island, which is already warm by late February or early March, I witnessed *hanami* for myself. Groups of excited people sit down, on the Japanese version of a picnic blanket, to admire the trees at their leisure usually with a glass or two of *sake*. Gradually the alcohol takes over and there's near hysteria. The most famous venues are floodlit and the partying can go on until late.

Hanami began in the Nara period, more than 1,000 years ago, when the emperor and his court would picnic beneath plum blossom. Even then double-flowered cherries were known in Japan but not elsewhere. That changed when in 1823 Philipp Franz von Siebold, a Bavarian doctor, was employed by the Dutch Government Service as a physician and natural history researcher. Siebold identified more than 1,000 ornamental plants and, on a second trip to Japan as a Dutch trade envoy between 1859 and 1862, he

▷

*Holds an Award of Garden Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society.
†Hardiness ratings given where available.

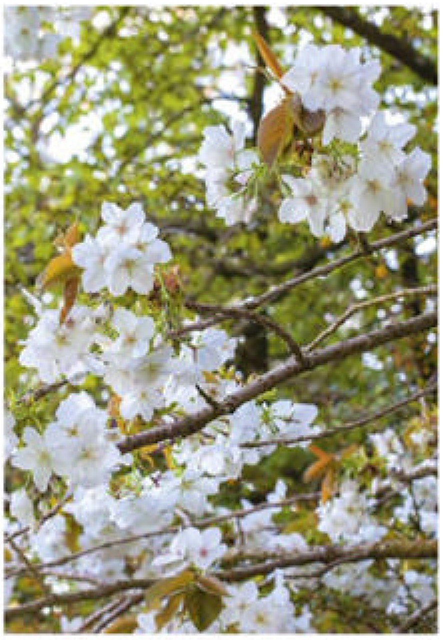
▷ introduced a Japanese cherry, described by the French botanist Élie-Abel Carrière in 1866 as *Cerasus sieboldii*, but now known as *Prunus* 'Takasago' (see previous page).

However, it was the English plant hunter Ernest Henry 'Chinese' Wilson who really ignited the passion for oriental plants on both sides of the Atlantic. Between 1903 and 1904 Wilson sent lots of ornamental cherries from the Yokohama Nursery Company in Japan to Harvard University's Arnold Arboretum in Boston, Massachusetts. He went on to write *The Cherries of Japan* in 1916, widening their appeal further. When in 1917 an intellectual society dedicated to the appreciation of cherries, the *Sakura-no-Kwai*, was formed in Tokyo, Wilson became a member and spent six years working there. The society wanted to preserve both the tradition of *hanami* and the trees themselves, so it collected scion wood from ancient cherries to establish conservation collections in Japan. Thanks to its efforts, the Tama Forest Science Garden, at the foot of Mount Takao, now has 250 different types of ornamental cherry.

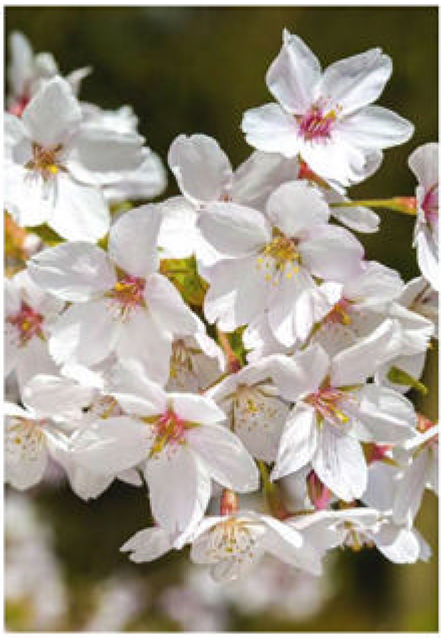
The British cherry expert, Collingwood Ingram, was invited to speak to the *Sakura-no-Kwai* in 1926. While there he was shown a painting of a beautiful white cherry that had become extinct in Japan. He recognised the tree as one he had seen in 'a moribund state' in a Sussex garden, from where he obtained scion wood and sent it back to Japan. There it was named the great white cherry, or 'Tai-haku' (right above), and in return Collingwood was given grafting wood from the following cherries: 'Fukurokuju', 'Bendono', 'Shogetsu' (below right) and 'Ichiyo'. By the 1930s wealthy gardeners on both sides of the Atlantic were planting Japanese cherry trees.

In recent years a new group of Japanese cherries has been raised by Masatoshi Asari. Some of these 105 named Matsumae cultivars have been assessed at RHS Wisley and given an AGM. The easiest to acquire is *P.* 'Matsumae-fuki' (also sold as 'Chocolate Ice') and *P.* 'Matsumae-hanagasa' (also sold as 'Pink Parasol'). These have been grafted on to stronger root stocks and make good garden plants. Like the older cultivars, their beautiful blossom will help lift your spirits on a spring day – and may even tempt you to start your own *hanami* tradition.

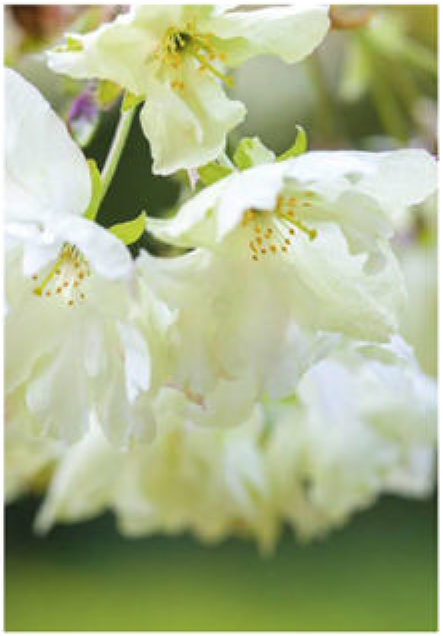
- Val's recommendations for Japanese cherries continue over the next six pages.



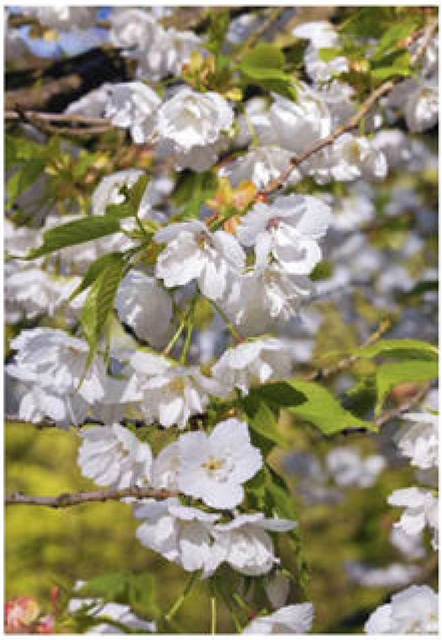
P. 'Tai-haku'
The blossom of this great white cherry looks fabulous when held erect against bronze-green, new leaves. It was reintroduced to Japan by British cherry expert Collingwood Ingram. 6m. AGM*. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b†.



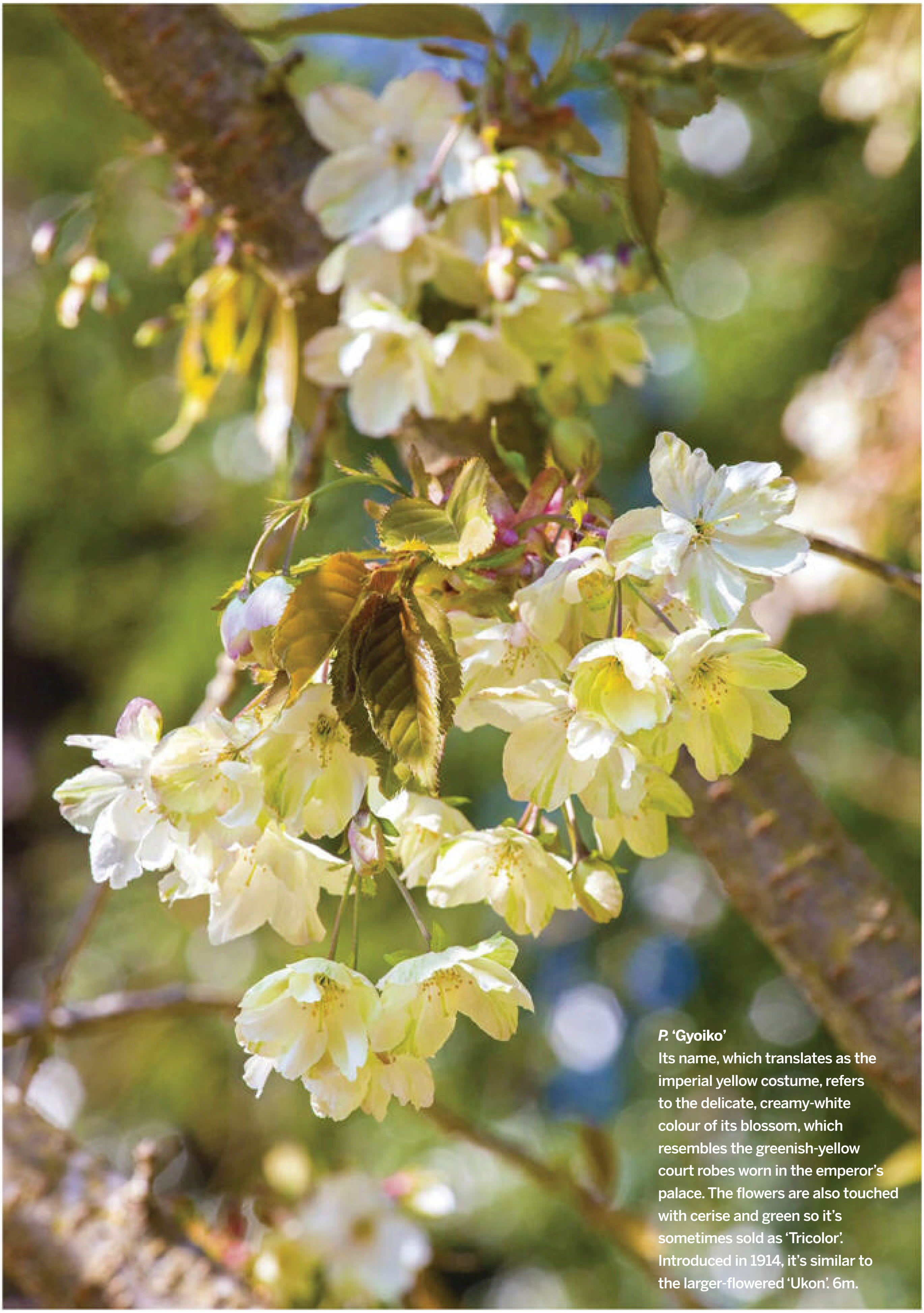
P. x *yedoensis*
Widely planted in Japan, this tree is short but wide spreading on poorer soil, but it can grow much larger if given better conditions. It has spectacular, almond-scented, blush-pink flowers. 8m. USDA 8a-9a.



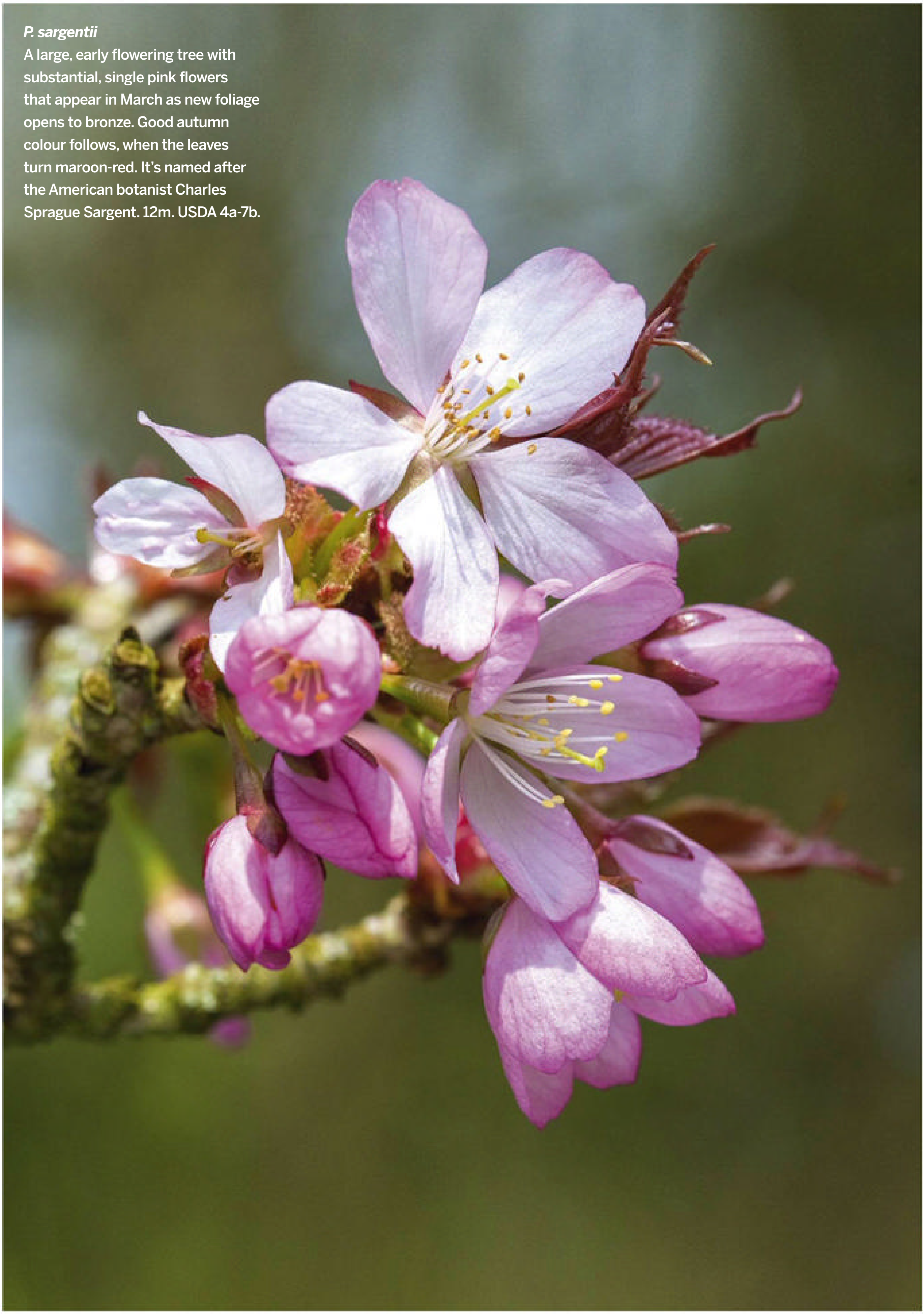
P. 'Shogetsu'
This spreading cherry tree, which is wider than it is tall, flowers later than most. Its light-pink buds, which open to white flowers, are sometimes likened to little ballerinas. 4m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.



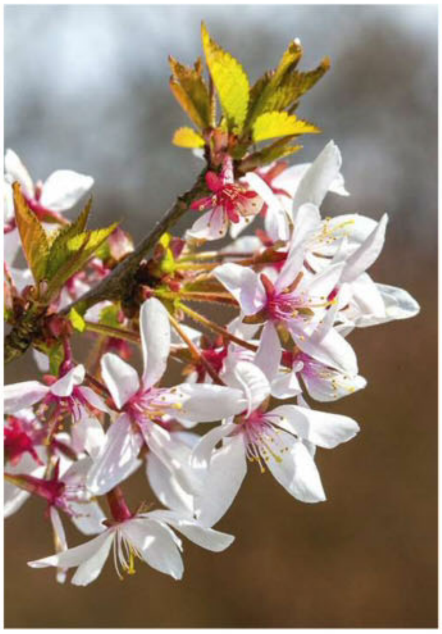
P. 'Shirotae'
A vigorous, strong tree with an unmistakable flat-topped, spreading habit and pure-white, semi-double flowers. It's one of the earliest cherries to flower with elegant, long-toothed foliage. 10m. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 6a-9b.



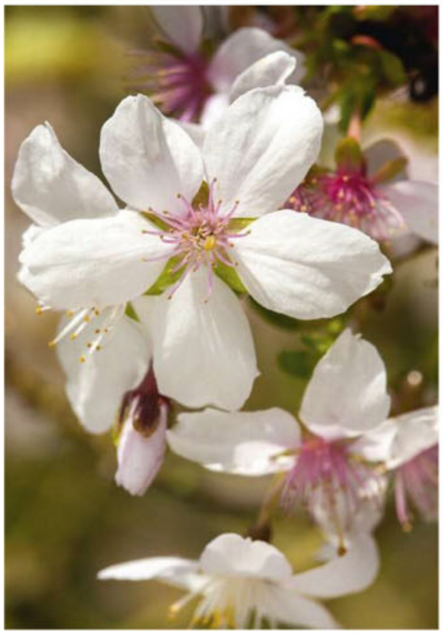
***P.* 'Gyoiko'**
Its name, which translates as the imperial yellow costume, refers to the delicate, creamy-white colour of its blossom, which resembles the greenish-yellow court robes worn in the emperor's palace. The flowers are also touched with cerise and green so it's sometimes sold as 'Tricolor'. Introduced in 1914, it's similar to the larger-flowered 'Ukon'. 6m.



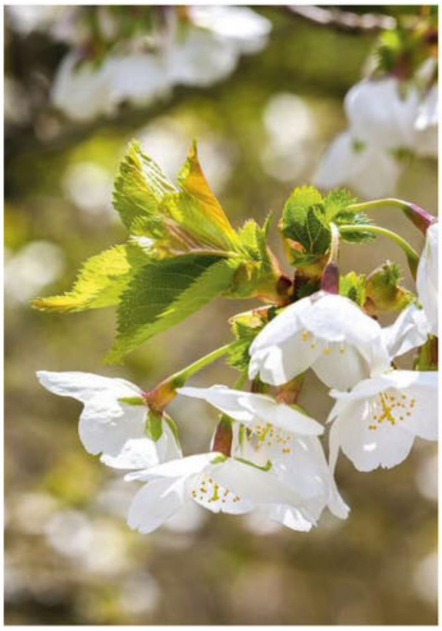
P. sargentii
A large, early flowering tree with substantial, single pink flowers that appear in March as new foliage opens to bronze. Good autumn colour follows, when the leaves turn maroon-red. It's named after the American botanist Charles Sprague Sargent. 12m. USDA 4a-7b.



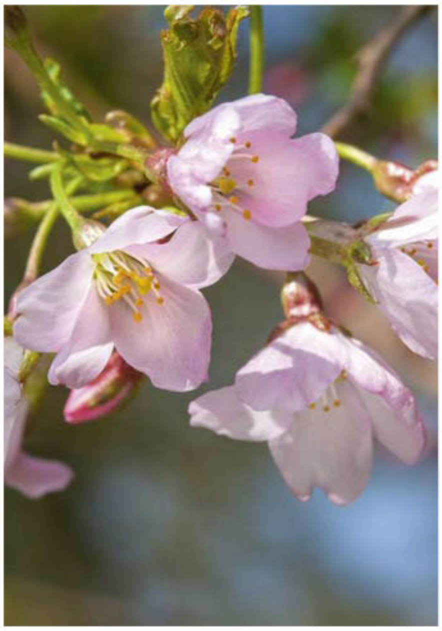
P. *incisa* 'Fujimae'
A large, slow-growing shrub or very small tree that is smothered with pale-pink buds that open to white in early spring. Colours up to orange in autumn and could be grown in a container. 3m. AGM. RHS H6.



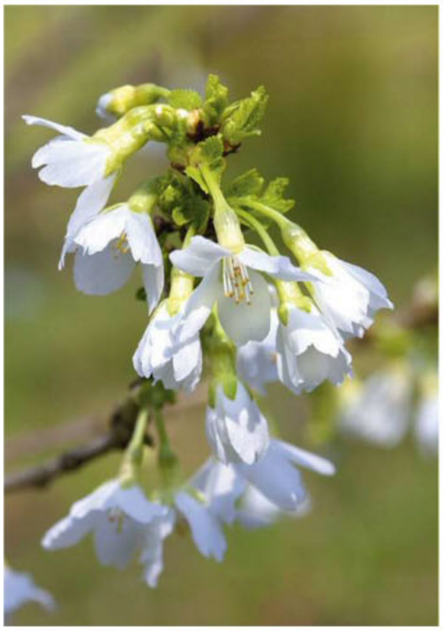
P. 'Fudan'
A small tree that, unlike most Japanese cherries, doesn't blaze with lots of flowers at the same time. Instead between November and April, a succession of pink buds appear, which develop into blush-white flowers. 8m.



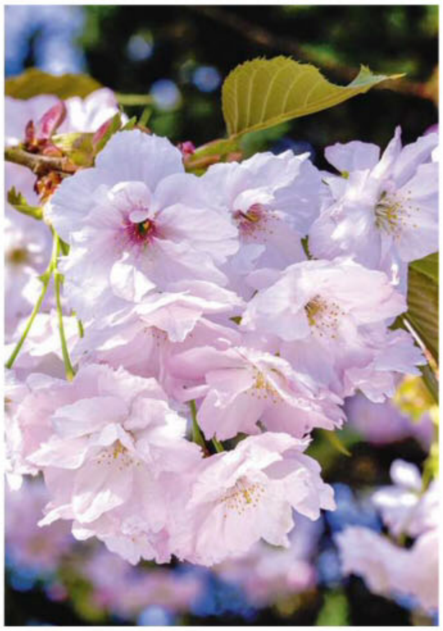
P. 'Umineko'
This stunning white cross between *P. speciosa* and *P. incisa*, was bred by the British cherry expert Collingwood Ingram in 1928. The April flowers are pure-white on an upright tree, and its name translates as seagull. 8m.



P. 'Pink Shell'
A small, elegant tree with spreading branches that dangle cup-shaped, pink blossom amid pale-green, serrated foliage. From a seedling of uncertain origins, it is one of the loveliest cherries and is widely sold. 4m.



P. 'Kiku-shidare'
Fully double, pink blossom appears as the new leaves break on branches that cascade downwards to form an umbrella. The green foliage also has attractive bright-red stems. 3m. USDA 3a-8b.



P. 'Pink Perfection'
Raised in 1935 at Waterers nursery in Surrey, and thought to be a hybrid seedling of 'Shogetsu' and 'Kwanzan'. Its rose-pink, very double flowers last longer than most, beginning in early May. 5m. AGM. RHS H6.

Cultivation

Collingwood 'Cherry' Ingram (1880-1981) of Benenden in Kent was a world-famous authority on Japanese cherries. In his 1948 book *Ornamental Cherries* he recommends siting trees on the 'sloping bank of a stream or lake, a situation relatively dry… yet affording the roots access to constant moisture'. Most cherries, he says, are very accommodating, growing almost anywhere, although he recommends a south or southwest aspect that delivers plenty of sunshine. Cold winters and warm summers are also appreciated.

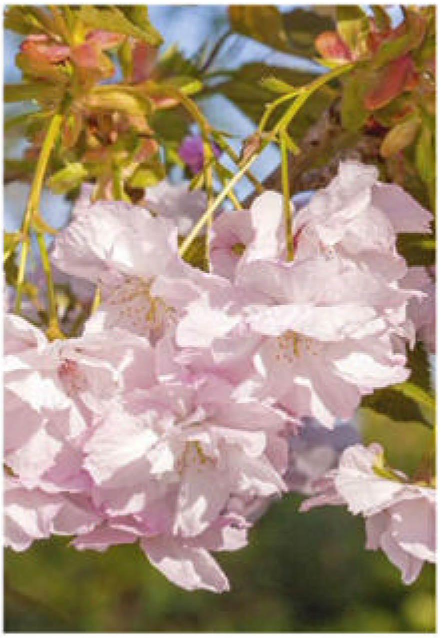
Where to see

Batsford Arboretum, near Moreton-in-Marsh, holds an extensive Plant Heritage collection of Japanese cherries. These are planted in an oriental setting complete with authentic Japanese rest house and traditional bridge. Japanese cherries have been planted at Batsford since the 1960s, so the garden boasts a large collection displayed to perfection on the south-facing slope. They include old favourites, such as 'Pink Perfection' (see page 63), 'Takasago' (page 59) and 'Shirotae' (page 60), as well as the modern Matsumae cherries. Most flower in April, when many magnolias are out too, and they tolerate the sticky Batsford clay well – although it does reduce their heights. Head gardener Matthew Hall has a genuine passion for trees and his favourite Japanese cherry is 'Chosu-hizakura', a really vivid pink.

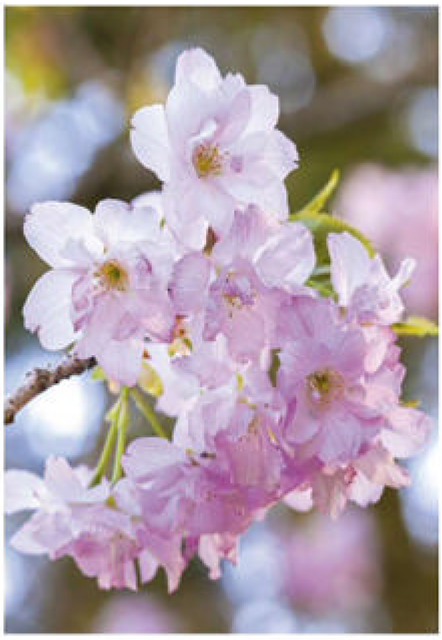
- **Batsford Arboretum**
  Batsford, Moreton-in-Marsh,
  Gloucestershire GL56 9QB.
  Tel 01386 701441, batsarb.co.uk

Where to buy

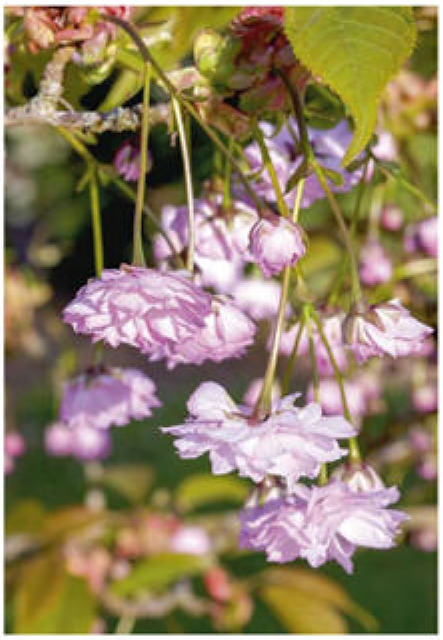
- **Ashwood Nurseries**
  Tel 01384 401996,
  ashwoodnurseries.com
- **Frank Matthews** (for suppliers)
  Tel 01584 810214,
  frankpmatthews.com
- **Ornamental Trees**
  Tel 01257 265232,
  ornamental-trees.co.uk



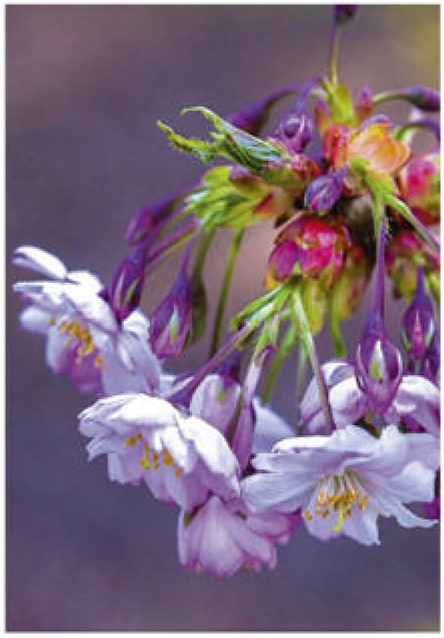
***P.* 'Hokusai'**
This pink cherry has a hint of apricot to its flowers. A vigorous, spreading tree, smothered in large, semi-double, pale-pink flowers that show up well against brownish-bronze leaves. 8m. AGM. RHS H6.



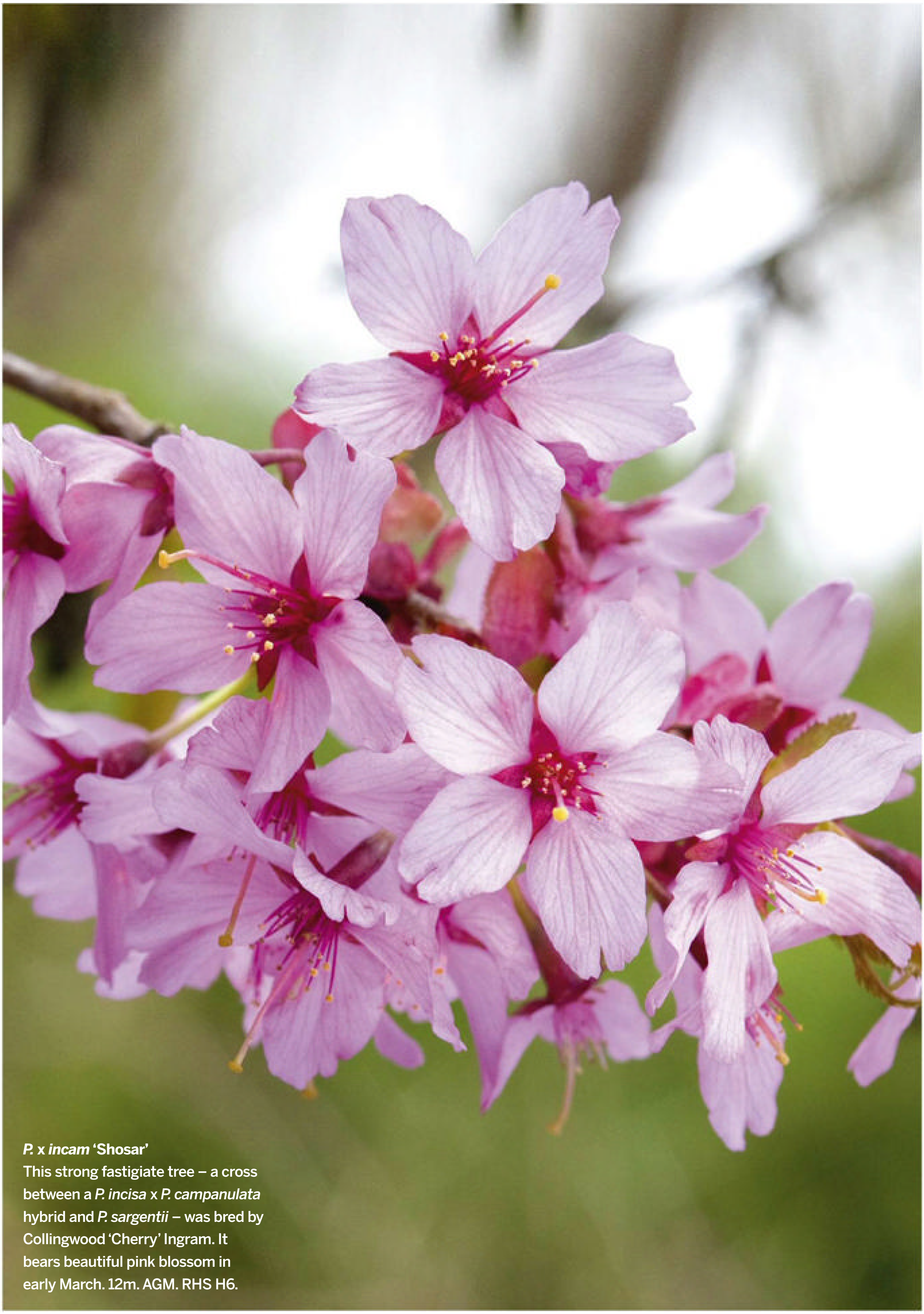
***P.* 'Edo'**
This April-flowering cherry has been grown in Japan since the the 17th century; its name is the former name for Tokyo. It is the best known of the pink frilly cherries with an inner tier of petals that is almost white. 5-6m.



***P.* 'Kiku'**
Its flowers open slowly and peak in May, offering densely packed, soft-pink petals. The name means chrysanthemum cherry and is a tree the cherry expert Collingwood Ingram found to be 'slow and stubborn'. 3m.



***P.* 'Horinji'**
Its name refers to an ancient Buddhist temple in Kyoto. The soft-pink, semi-double flowers are held in purplish buds so the neatly arranged flowers on this small, upright tree have a unique two-tone effect. 5m.



***P. x incam* 'Shosar'**

This strong fastigiate tree – a cross between a *P. incisa* x *P. campanulata* hybrid and *P. sargentii* – was bred by Collingwood 'Cherry' Ingram. It bears beautiful pink blossom in early March. 12m. AGM. RHS H6.

THANKS TO BATSFORD ARBORETUM WHERE THE IIMAGES IN THIS FEATURE WERE PHOTOGRAPHED

Peter Bauwens

The Belgian vegetable evangelist discusses the delights of meeting your heroes, his enthusiasm for experimentation and reveals what puts a smile on his face

WORDS JOHN HOYLAND PORTRAIT CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Peter Bauwens never stops smiling. "I'm a happy man," he says. "I've been growing vegetables for 40 years. Growing plants; growing vegetables – this makes a person happy." Peter, with his wife Kathelijne Thiers, has a nursery near the Belgian border with the Netherlands. It has introduced European gardens to an astonishing range of fruit and vegetables, which the couple have selected for their beauty as much as their taste.

Although he spent his childhood in rural Belgium, Peter didn't have his first garden until he left college in his early twenties. "I went to art school in the late 1970s. I was too young to be a real hippy – I would have been one – I was interested in nature and the environment and had been a vegetarian since I was 16 so I became interested in growing food. If you don't eat meat you start looking for interesting things to put on your plate."

As a young husband Peter stayed at home to bring up his family while his wife worked. He grew all the family's food and soon realised that he could be selling vegetable plants and seeds to other gardeners. In the 1980s he started attending plant fairs, where he found himself among a new generation of nurserymen who were growing perennials, grasses and shrubs that hadn't, until then, been seen by Belgian gardeners. "It was exciting but difficult. There were a lot of Latin names being thrown around and there in the corner, like a funny little farmer, was me with my vegetable plants. It was hard to establish a place in that world."

It was at this time that he met the renowned Belgian horticulturist Jelena de Belder, who was very encouraging and supported his desire to grow food that looked as good as it tasted. "I had one advantage: I went to art school. I knew how to display things, how to show things, how to look at things, and see how they can be best presented. I learned how to get people to look at vegetables in a different way, to make them attractive and enticing and not just insignificant plants in tiny pots."

Traditionally, vegetable gardens are empty in winter but not Peter's: "We aim to have interest throughout the year. And I want to show people how to do this as well. Jelena taught me that it is a wonderful thing to give someone a plant, but it is even better to show them how to grow it and make their garden more beautiful."

In the early days of his gardening Peter came across a book by Joy Larkcom, which he says "opened a new world for me – a passion for growing food that was inspiring". Shortly afterwards he discovered the graphic way in which Roger Phillips photographed plants. "The way he looked at plants was a revelation to me in my work as a grower, writer, photographer and artist," explains Peter. Eventually Peter met these two influential heroes. "I love speaking to them both. It is no longer like teacher and pupil. Their work is the foundation for what I do and I am very thankful for that. They have shown me that there is a whole world of fruit and vegetables that needs to be explored."

It is this exploration that Peter wants to continue; trying to find existing food plants and to breed new ones that are suited to modern families. "There is a lot of interest in old varieties – heirloom vegetables," he says. "Of course it is important to preserve these but I think that we need a new generation of vegetables too. Vegetables that are easier to grow, that have more flavour and are more nutritional."

The way we live has changed enormously over the past 50 years but, Peter believes, gardening hasn't. "No one has the need, or the space, to grow 50kg of potatoes," he says. "Or the time to pinch out and net melons." He feels strongly that we not only need new varieties but also new ways of gardening. "I question everything and experiment all the time with breeding new varieties and growing familiar plants in new ways." The result is a seed list that includes melons that are no fuss to grow and plants such as quinoa and edamame that most of us thought we could never grow.

Peter's enthusiasm for growing vegetables is irresistible. "Growing your own food is a way of connecting to the world," he says. "Issues around soil and air pollution, climate change, water resources are all brought into sharp focus if you have a vegetable garden. Even a few salad plants in a pot on your patio and you begin to notice all sorts of things, that you are connected to the natural world. Most of all it makes you happy. That is the important thing. Enjoy it. Be happy." ◻

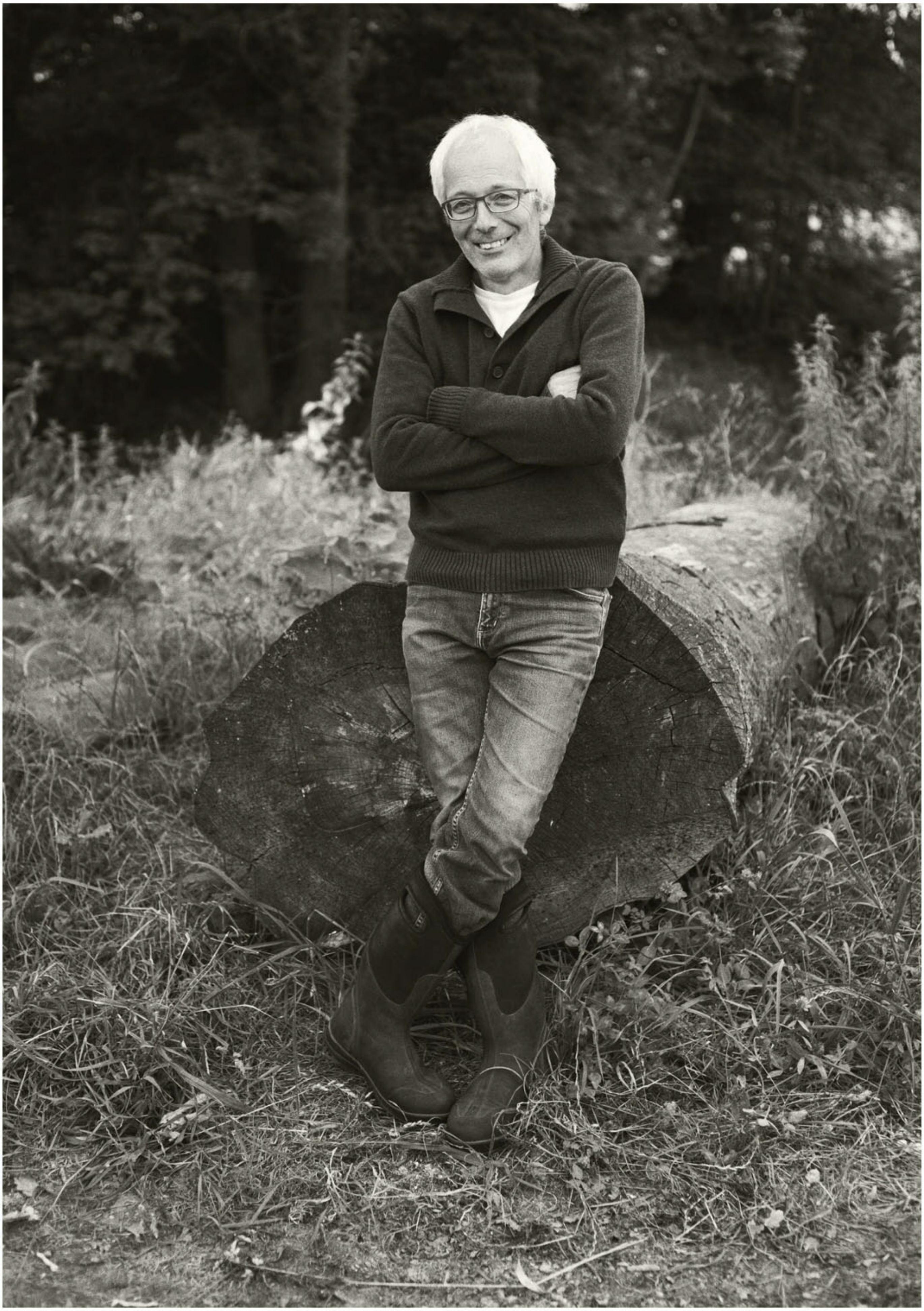
USEFUL INFORMATION

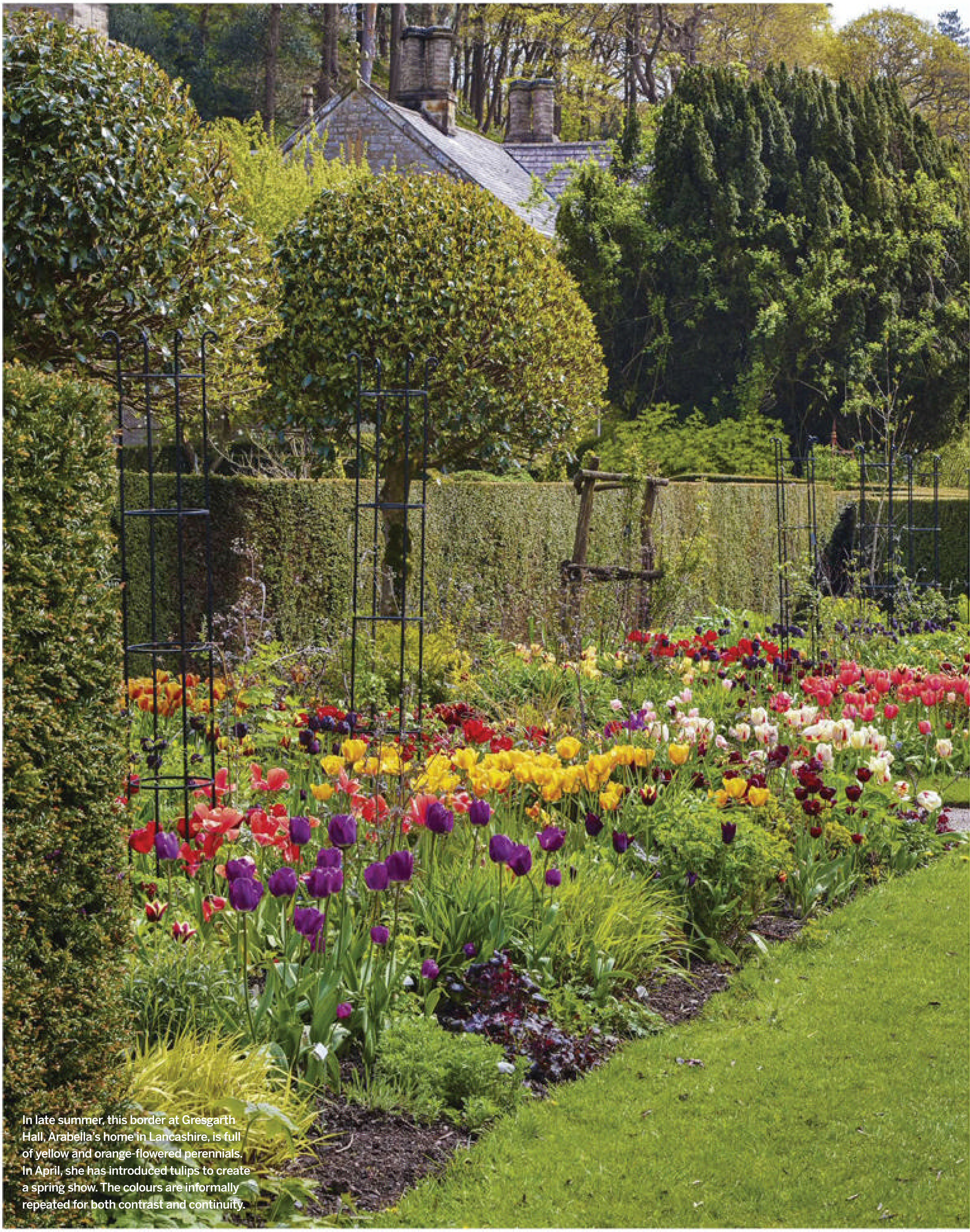
Peter is exhibiting at Arboretum Kalmthout, 19 April; Beervelde, 8-10 May; Hex, 12-14 June; and Bingerden, 19-21 June. For more information about these and Peter's seed list visit denieuwetuin.be

NEXT MONTH

Novelist and *Gardens Illustrated* columnist Frank Ronan.

Growing your own food is a way of connecting to the world. Even a few salad plants in a pot on your patio and you begin to notice all sorts of things





In late summer, this border at Gresgarth Hall, Arabella's home in Lancashire, is full of yellow and orange-flowered perennials. In April, she has introduced tulips to create a spring show. The colours are informally repeated for both contrast and continuity.

Painting with petals

Designer Arabella Lennox-Boyd shares the secrets behind the colourful shows of spring tulips she creates in the borders of her home Gresgarth Hall in Lancashire

WORDS ARABELLA LENNOX-BOYD PHOTOGRAPHS ALLAN POLLOK-MORRIS

CHARLIE HOPKINSON

Arabella Lennox-Boyd is a leading garden designer and the winner of six Chelsea Gold Medals.

Though I try to plan tulips and other bulbs in August, the garden here at Gresgarth seems to distract me with its daily surprises and challenges and, suddenly, I find that autumn is upon me and the bulb order is still on my desk, unfinished.

Indulging in different tulip combinations in my garden each year is a treat. I adore all the tulip types, particularly species, but have found that the early flowering ones and the species, too, suffer in this climate, preferring the drier conditions of their native countries. I choose mainly Triumph and Darwin hybrids in basic colour schemes, because the flowering times are just right for this garden, and then I follow this scheme on each side of the house's main terrace and shrub borders.

My most experimental schemes are planted in a series of pots outside my studio and, if these are lovely, they become candidates for the terraces the following year. In the borders I tend to plant single colours but, in my yellow herbaceous border, I have started playing around with brown, orange and red tulips.

I love to combine and interplant tulips with other reliable spring things. In pots, the forget-me-not *Myosotis sylvatica* in blue or white do very well for me in chilly, wet Lancashire, as do the small-flowered winter pansies. In my big borders, I go mad with colour, planting tulips among the early euphorbias, such as the dramatically dark-leaved *Euphorbia* Blackbird (= 'Nothowlee') and chartreuse-flowered *E.* x *martini*, and even the plum-leaved cow parsley, *Anthriscus sylvestris* 'Ravenswing'. The flowers and leaves of all these plants make fabulous foils and give volume to my beds when the tulips disappear.

I remove my tulips each year as I feel the show is never as strong in subsequent springs. Sometimes one's least favourite tulip – in my case a bright-red one with a dark centre – comes up every year looking just dreadful among the paler colours of the emerging herbaceous plants, but I can't bring myself to remove it. I am lucky to have never had a problem with tulip fire. I order only top-size bulbs from good suppliers and plant them about 20cm deep. Sometimes my bulbs are removed for me, annoyingly early, by mice and water rats. I've learned to cover susceptible pots with a discreet cover of fine wire mesh, which one hardly notices and, in the beds, I take a chance. This year the mice and rats seem to have had a bonanza and I doubt I shall have any tulips left in the shrub borders at all.

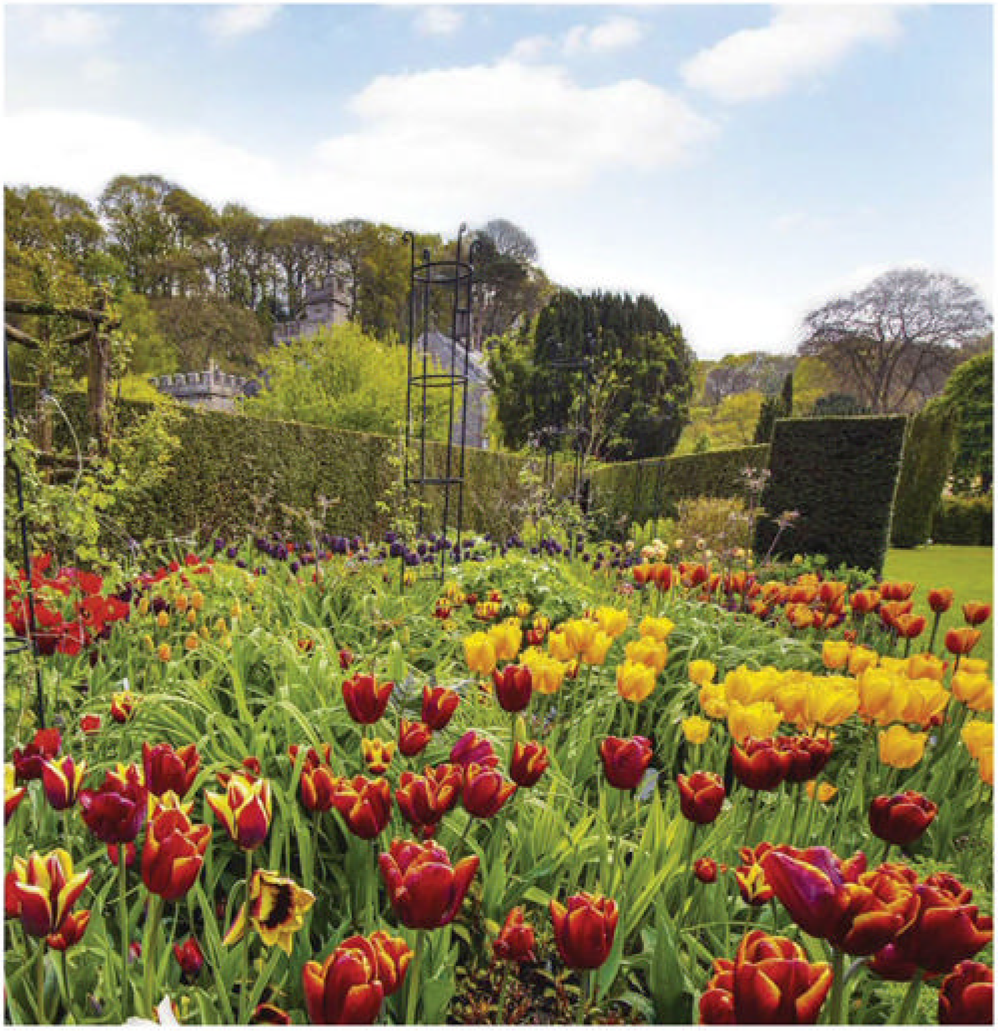
Combining tulip colours is a delight and I take inspiration from many places. Catalogues are like sweet shops and the Dutch still lifes make the historic Rembrandt varieties look ravishing, but it is from Nature herself that I take the most inspiration. While the pictures on the following pages show the fun I have in borders and pots, I adore nothing more than a simple, informal group of *Tulipa* 'Helmar' beneath a fragrant *Rhododendron luteum*, for example. Or *Tulipa sylvestris* drifting under a large *Magnolia denudata*. The ability of tulips to be subtle or a statement is perhaps the greatest luxury they afford.

• Turn the page for four of Arabella's sumptuous tulip combinations for borders and containers.

*Holds an award of garden merit from the Royal Horticultural Society. †Hardiness ratings given where available.

Blaze of colour

This combination is a selection of colours that intrigued me. Some are bright and some are subtle, but they all share the yellow-and-orange colour theme of this border. These early-to-mid-season cultivars are at their best before the foliage of the permanent herbaceous plants gain height and volume.



1 *Tulipa* 'Gavota'
An exotic, yellow-banded, deep-mahogany Triumph tulip. Wonderful with the lime-green flowers of *Euphorbia* x *martini*. 40cm. AGM*. RHS H6, USDA 3a-9b†. April.

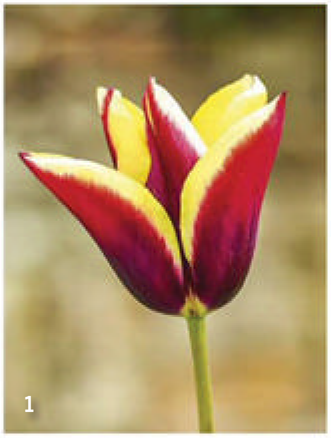
2 *T.* 'Abu Hassan'
A Triumph tulip in deep terracotta-red, subtly edged with gold. Useful to drift among the pale-yellow and apricot tulips. 45cm. USDA 3a-8b. April – May.

3 *T.* 'Hollandia'
Huge, glowing red, cup-shaped flowers that seem to change hue with the light. A favourite for its colour and scale. 45cm. USDA 3a-7b. April – May.

4 *T.* 'Ronaldo'
Rich, deep maroon-purple Triumph tulip with a metallic lustre on the outer petals. A good dark colour for adding visual depth to the combination. 40cm. USDA 4a-8b. April – May.

5 *T.* 'Blushing Apeldoorn'
Tall, Chinese yellow, subtly edged with orange, Darwin Hybrid. This cultivar was new to me, but I will certainly be using it again. 56cm. USDA 3a-8b. Mid April.

6 *T.* 'Helmar'
A dramatic yellow bloom, flamed with dark red; as wonderful in combinations as it is on its own, often stealing the show. 55cm. USDA 3a-7b. May.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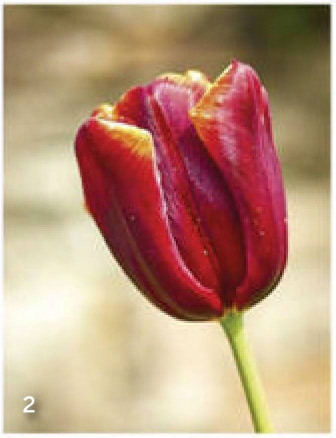
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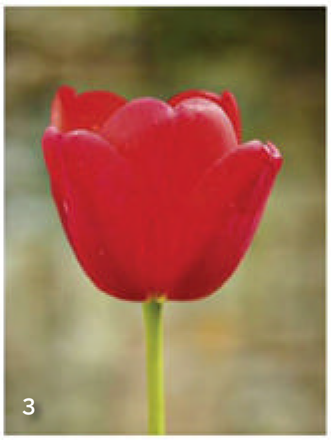
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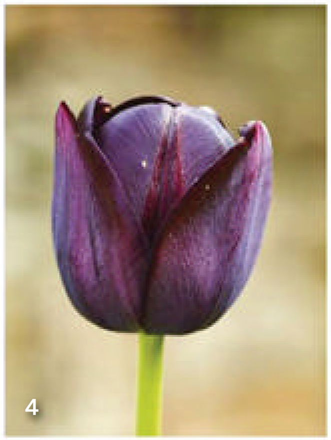
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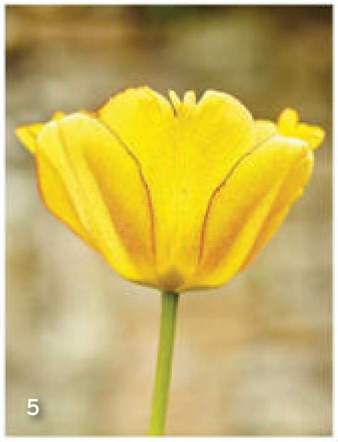
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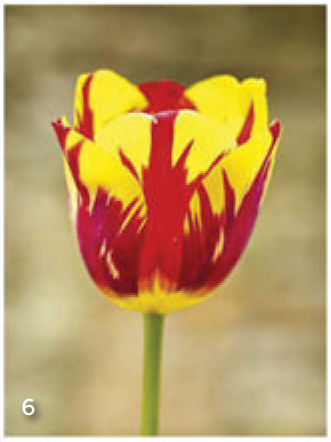
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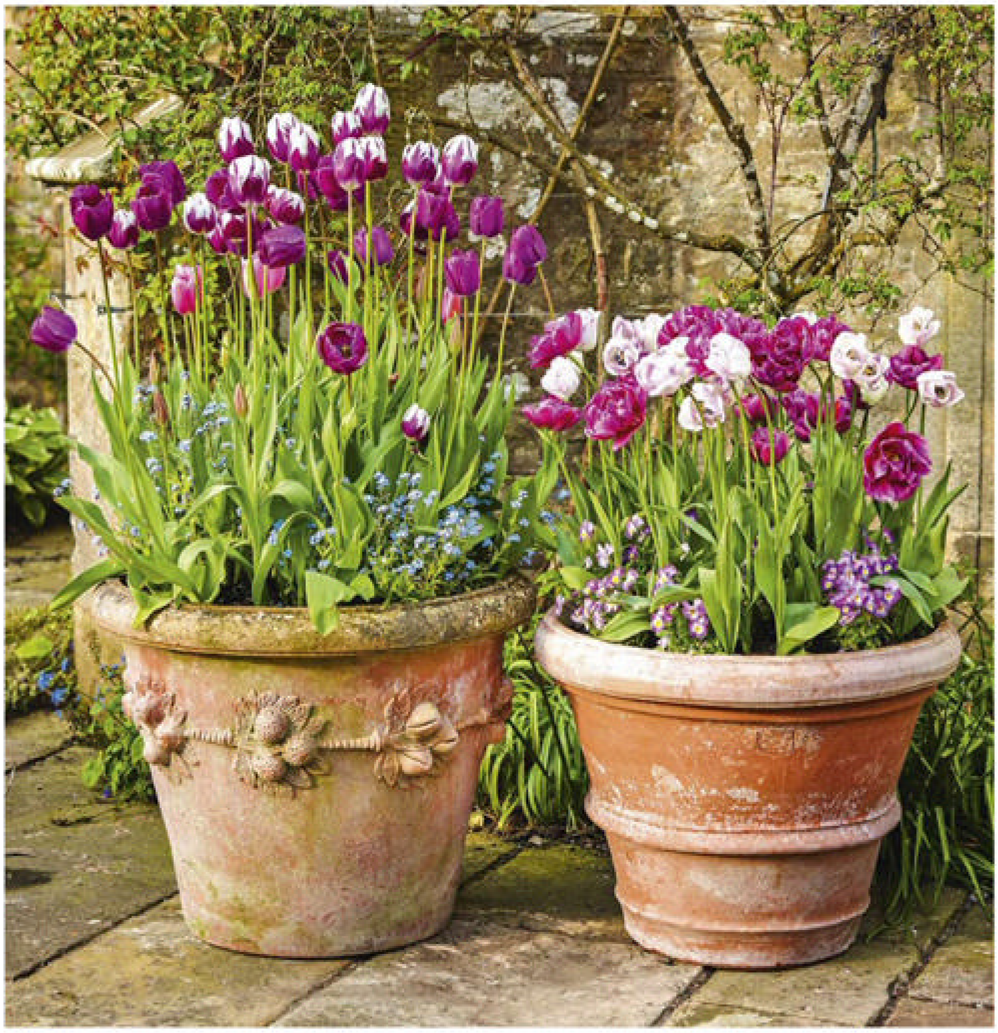


Calm and collected

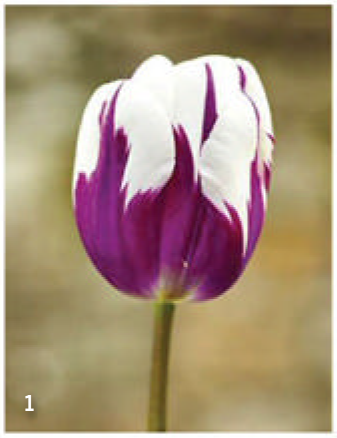
The variation on a colour theme of ivory, raspberry and pink makes a restful scene, while allowing the single and double flower textures to come to the fore in these Italian terracotta pots I have collected. Blue forget-me-nots and pink winter pansies continue the contrast.

1 *T.* 'Zurel'
See following page.

2 *T.* 'Purple Flag'
Beautiful, burgundy-purple, full to almost double, this Triumph tulip, is especially good in pots where its detail can be admired. 45cm. USDA 3a-8b. April – May.

3 *T.* 'Rosalie'
Delicate, pink splashed with darker pink on the outer petals. Quite simply, a good pink. 50cm. USDA 3a-8b. Late April.

4 *T.* 'Jan Reus'
Deep burgundy-red and elegantly tall. Particularly good with pale colours. 50cm. USDA 3a-7b. April – May.



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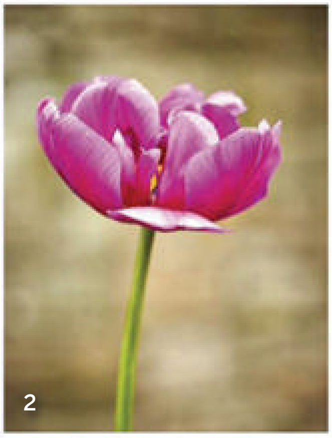

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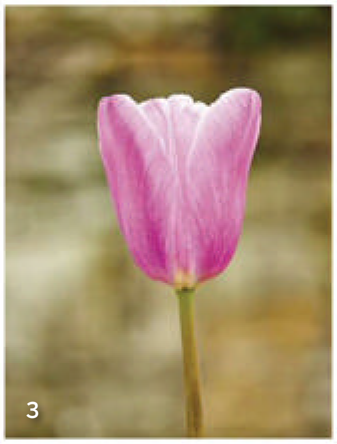

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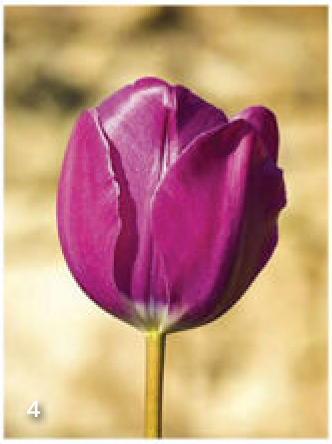

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How to combine colours with panache

I am not a slave to colour combinations, especially with tulips, but I have found that certain rules often seem to apply. Orange tulips are not my first choice, but when planted with dark, burgundy ones, and drifted through paler buff- and tawny-coloured varieties, the combination looks wonderfully exotic and luxurious.

When planting tulips in borders, it is best to take inspiration from the surrounding herbaceous plants and shrubs. This year, next to the white-flowering *Rhododendron* x *mucronatum* I planted the scented *T.* 'Brown Sugar' among the unfolding leaves of ferns, herbaceous peonies, variegated hostas and early *Euphorbia* x *martini*. Similarly, a swathe of pink *T.* 'Mistress' planted through Barnhaven primroses looks lovely when combined with the blossom of espalier- or goblet-trained apples.

In large pots, be generous with tulips and plant as many as you can in layers. Flamed or streaked tulips add a lovely detail to groups of solid-coloured tulips or mixed with daffodils. *T.* 'Exotic Emperor' with *Narcissus* 'Thalia' is a successful combination, while *T.* 'Peppermintstick', with its glistening white petals, deep pink on the outside, is a real delight in smaller pots.

Finally, when planting in borders, if in doubt, plant informally and in bold drifts to avoid the 'bitty' look.

Raspberry ripple

A mélange of plum, purple, pink and ivory tulips. The slight variation among flower heights gives depth to this combination, as do the dark blooms, visually receding into the background, while their lighter partners seem to float, in this picture, on a choppy sea of green.

1 *T.* 'Zurel'
The purple-marbled-ivory petals of this Triumph tulip, also known as *T.* Blueberry Ripple, give an historic quality to this scheme. 50cm. USDA 3a-8b. April – May.

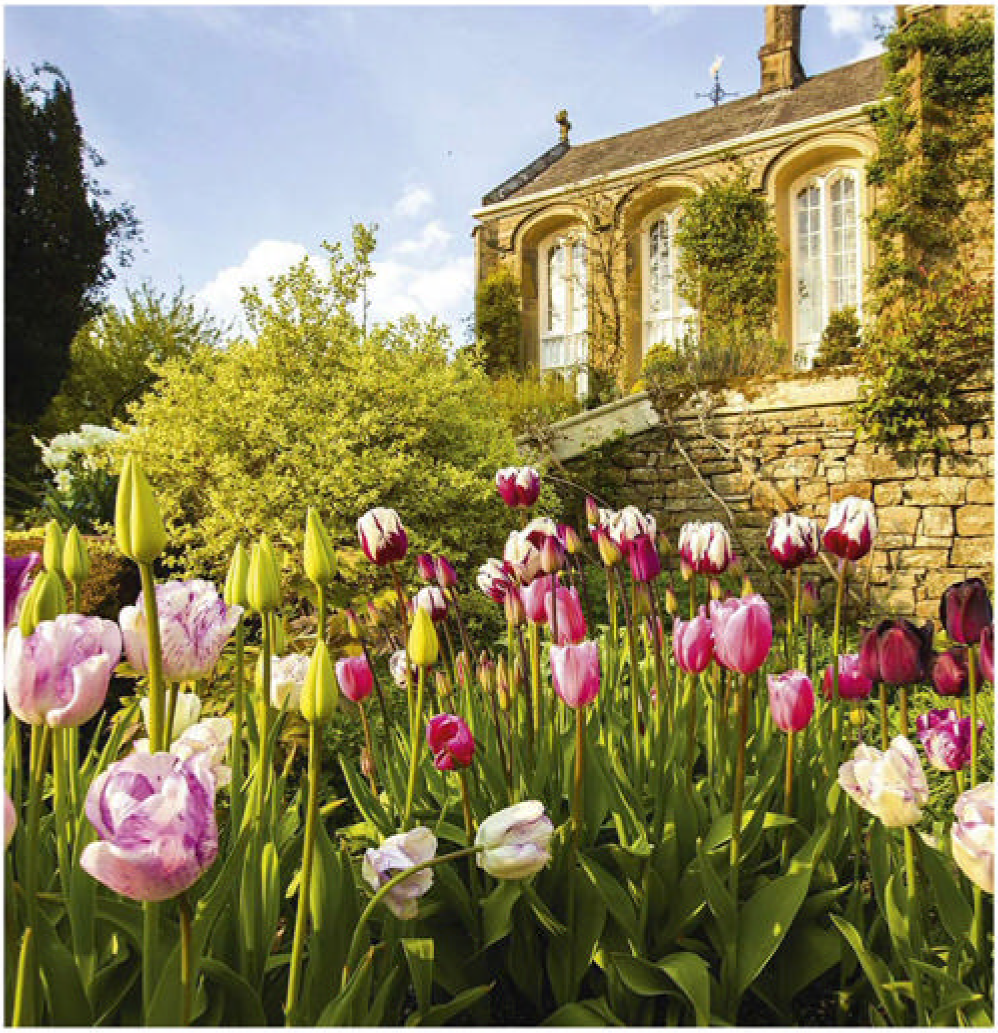
2 *T.* 'Peerless Pink'
A bloom of soft, satiny pink with darker splashes that combines well with the darker and paler tulips in this combination. 40cm. USDA 3a-7b. Late April.

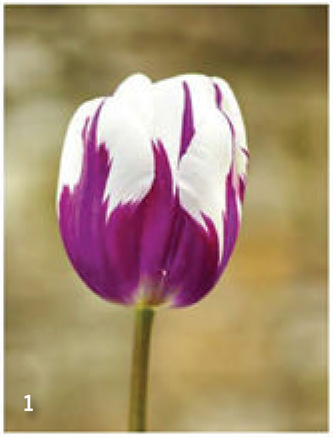
3 *T.* 'Paul Scherer'
Rounded and ruffled petals in deep cassis, this single, late tulip appears slightly earlier than *T.* 'Queen of Night'. A good, dark Triumph tulip without being sombre. 45cm. AGM. RHS H6, USDA 3a-8b. April – May.

4 *T.* 'Shirley'
Delightful and charming, subtle white with a mauvy-pink picotee edge. I love the flower shape and its bluey-black basal centre. 55cm. USDA 3a-7b. Mid May.

5 *T.* 'Greuze'
Sturdy, dark stems support luscious purple blooms with an ember glow in the right light. A perfect bridge between *T.* 'Zurel' and *T.* 'Paul Scherer'. 55cm. USDA 3a-9a. May.

6 *T.* 'Clearwater'
A pristine, tall white bloom with a classic shape. Brings light to the combination and chimes with the ivory tips of *T.* 'Zurel'. 60cm. USDA 4a-8b. April – May.

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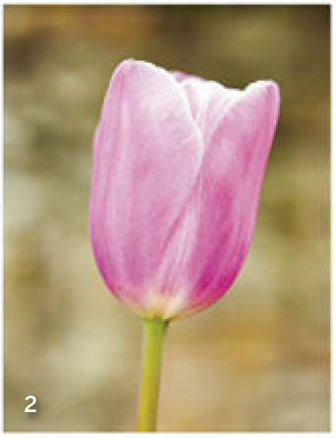
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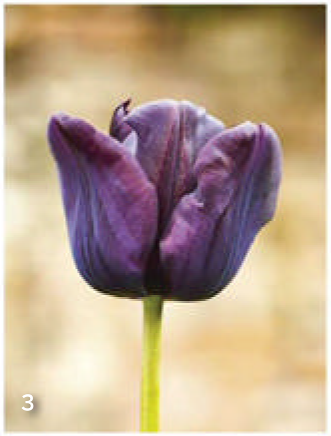
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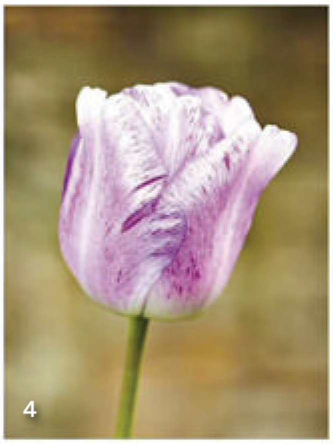
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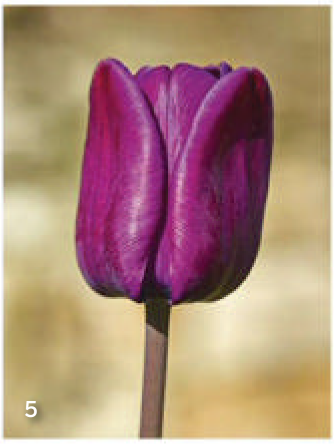
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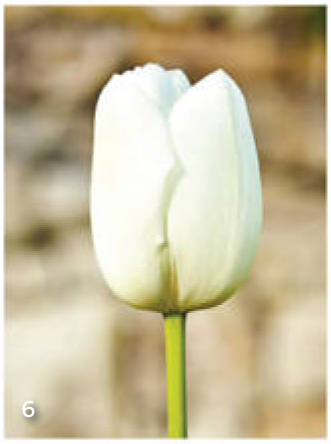
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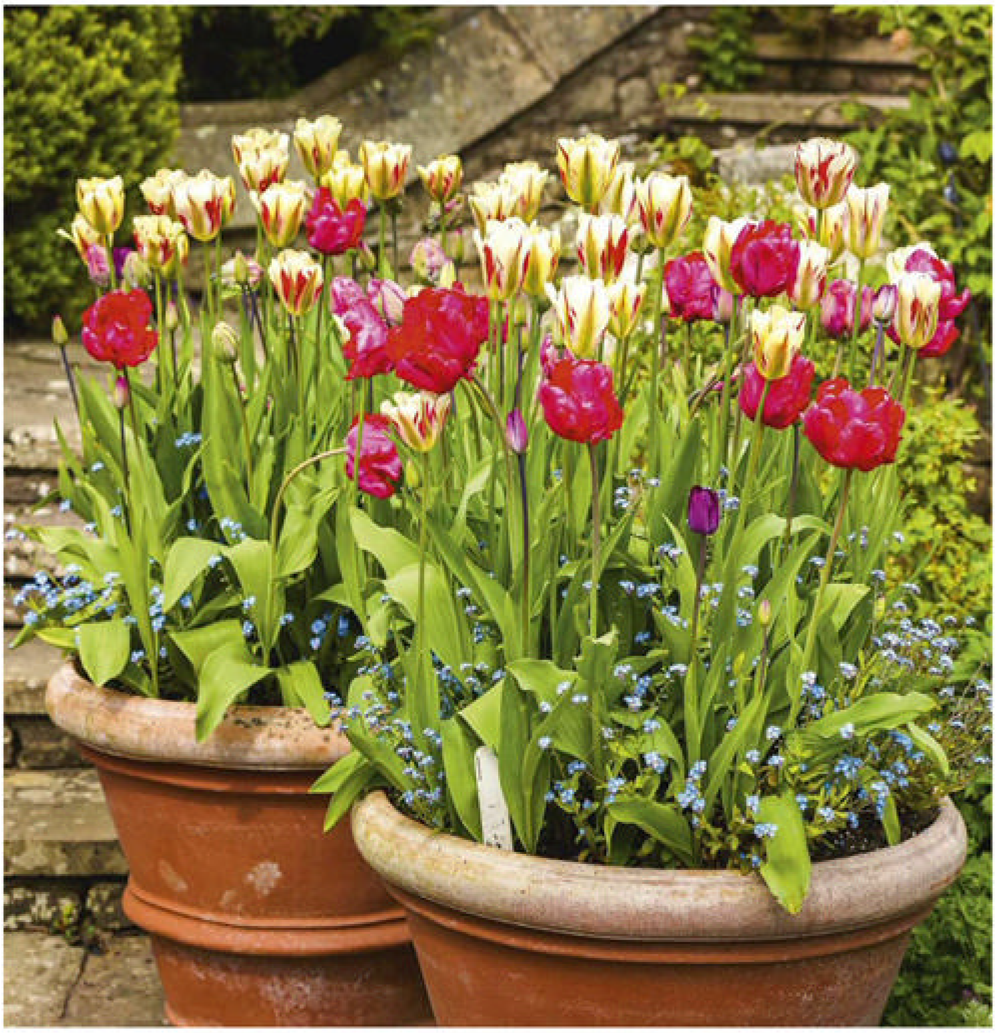
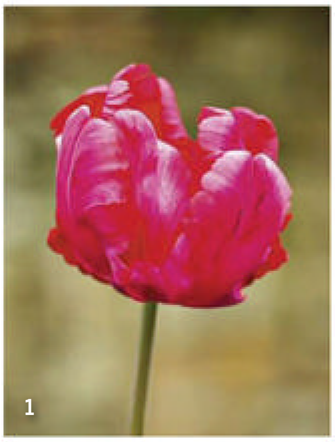


Strawberry cream

The Viridiflora Group tulips, such as *T.* 'Flaming Springgreen', gives a freshness to any scheme by virtue of its green flare. The creamy petals give sparkle to the grey stone background and their upright form offers a striking difference to the parrot-feathered petals of *T.* 'Maywonder'. Forget-me-nots add delicacy.

1 *T.* 'Maywonder'
Double, late, peony-flowered type, the colour of rich, bright pink taffeta that brings pep to subtle combinations. 40cm. USDA 4a-8b. May.

2 *T.* 'Flaming Springgreen'
A red-streaked sport of the classic *T.* 'Spring Green', blending effortlessly with cool and warm colour combinations. 45cm. USDA 3a-9b. May.



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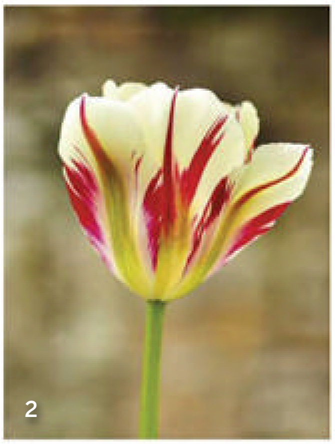

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Where to buy

Avon Bulbs
Burnt House Farm, Mid Lambrook, South Petherton Somerset TA13 5HE.
Tel 01460 242177,
avonbulbs.co.uk
A many-times Chelsea-Gold-Medal-winning supplier of excellent tulip series, including rare ones.

Bloms Bulbs
Primrose Nurseries, Melchbourne, Beds MK44 1ZZ.
Tel 01234 709099,
blomsbulbs.com
With a tempting annual display at the Chelsea Flower Show, Bloms stocks good-sized bulbs of traditional and new varieties.

de Jager
Church Farm, Ulcombe, Maidstone, Kent ME17 1DN.
Tel 01622 840229,
dejager.co.uk
Lovely group of high-quality tulips and other bulbs assembled by a sure eye.

J Parker's
14 Hadfield Street, Old Trafford, Manchester M16 9FG.
Tel 0161 848 1100,
jparkers.co.uk
One of the largest suppliers of an extensive range. A useful print catalogue with good pictures.

Jacques Amand International
The Nurseries, Clamp Hill, Stanmore, Middlesex HA73JS.
Tel 020 8420 7110,
jacquesamandintl.com
A family business of 70 years with an array of top-size bulbs and a willingness to seek out unusual cultivars not in stock.

Peter Nyssen
124 Flixton Road, Urmston, Manchester M41 5BG.
Tel 0161 747 4000,
peternyssen.com
A great variety of tulips, well-described in its catalogue, and the team give great advice.

Rose Cottage Plants
Bay Tree Farm, Epping Green, Essex CM16 6PU.
Tel 01992 573775,
rosecottageplants.co.uk
A lovely selection of tulips, border and species. Offers good advice.

Sarah Raven
Tel 0845 092 0283,
sarahraven.com
Inspiring catalogue and website full of tempting colours. All tested in Sarah's own garden.

In brief

What Romantic garden surrounding a former farm worker's cottage, planted with roses and thousands of spring-flowering bulbs.
Points of interest Huge selection of tulip cultivars, box parterre, traditional weatherboard and black-tarred barn, typical of the region.
Where On the former island of Walcheren in the southwestern province of Zeeland, the Netherlands.
Size 1,000 square metres.
Soil Heavy clay.
Climate Temperate maritime.
Hardiness rating USDA 10a.

Alongside a path made from reclaimed bricks, Hetty has planted a pretty mix of pink and purple tulips, including 'Flaming Purissima', 'Exotic Emperor', 'Negrita', 'Judith Leyster' and 'Rosalie'.

Electric dreams

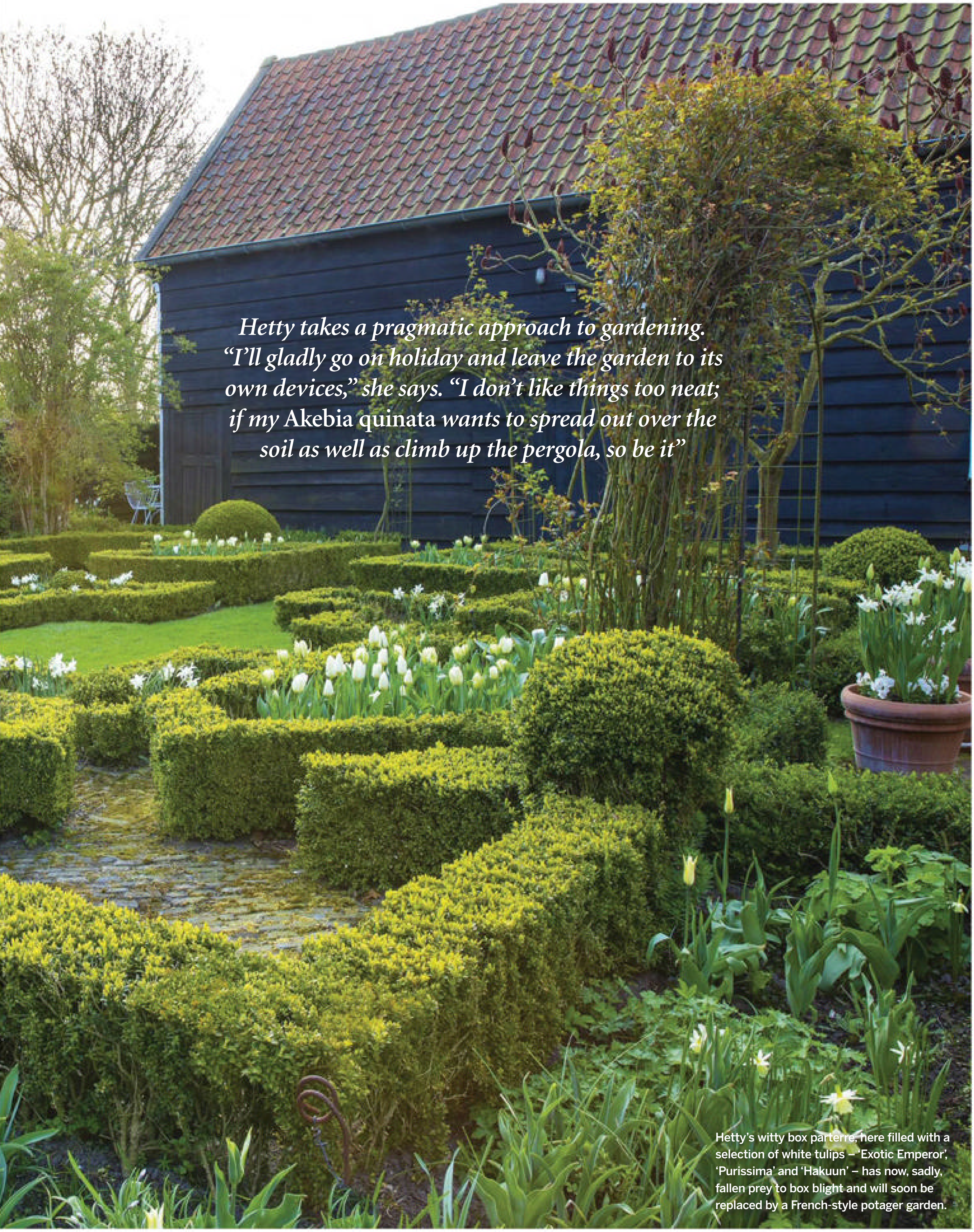
Bulbs are Hetty van Baalen's passion, and in spring the gardens surrounding her Dutch cottage light up with thousands of tulips, narcissi and hyacinths in a rich, eclectic mix of vibrant colour

WORDS **SIMONE VAN HEININGEN** PHOTOGRAPHS **MARIANNE MAJERUS**

"If you think you need 100, buy 200," is Hetty van Baalen's advice when it comes to bulbs. "You really need big, big numbers if you want them to have an impact." Proving her point, she leads me to five old dustbins, planted up with *Tulipa clusiana* 'Cynthia', *Bellis perennis* and *Calamagrostis brachytricha*. "You're looking at 100 Cynthias," she says. "And don't bother taking any bulbs out. Not everything will come back but you may be surprised. Among my white *Tulipa* 'Hakuun' there is this one *Tulipa* 'Apeldoorn' – the strongest red tulip – that I put in 30 years ago. I don't have the heart to get rid of it. I simply cut the flower and put it in a vase."

This old friend is one of thousands Hetty has planted over the years. She and her husband, Toon de Ruiter, bought their cottage in 1980 when the garden was nothing but bare soil. "As a child, I'd visit my grandfather's beautiful garden," remembers Hetty. "And I would always think, one day, when I grow up…" Fulfilling her dream on this strip of heavy clay, which cuts through the mainly sandy soil of coastal Zeeland, took some doing. "Those first years, I would turn all of the soil just before winter, wait until the frost had passed and then add manure and sand."

The daughter of a vegetable and flower grower, Hetty takes a pragmatic approach to gardening. "I'll gladly go on holiday and leave the garden to its own devices," she says. "Obviously, I deadhead the tulips, but I simply let the foliage die off. I don't like things too neat; if my *Akebia quinata* wants to spread out over the soil as well as climb up the pergola, so be it." That said, Hetty has decided to prune the *Prunus lusitanica* 'Myrtifolia' into tidy spheres. Hetty loves topiary – "I go for harmony not symmetry" – but in common with many Dutch gardeners, her box fell prey to *Cylindrocladium buxicola* blight. So, the box parterre filled with green-striped *Tulipa* 'Exotic Emperor', pure-white *Tulipa* 'Hakuun' and sweet-smelling *Narcissus* 'Thalia', will soon be a thing of the past. "But when a door closes, a window opens," says Hetty, who is planning a French-style 'potager' in its place. Although Hetty is open to change, the front garden is always planted up with ▷



Hetty takes a pragmatic approach to gardening. "I'll gladly go on holiday and leave the garden to its own devices," she says. "I don't like things too neat; if my Akebia quinata *wants to spread out over the soil as well as climb up the pergola, so be it"*

Hetty's witty box parterre, here filled with a selection of white tulips – 'Exotic Emperor', 'Purissima' and 'Hakuun' – has now, sadly, fallen prey to box blight and will soon be replaced by a French-style potager garden.

Hetty made the obelisk and painted it bright blue to match the contemporary seat by designer Marleen Booy.

▷ bulbs in shades of red and yellow, with for instance *Tulipa* 'Flaming Parrot' and *T.* 'Mickey Mouse' standing out against the white-fronted cottage and the old, black barn.

In summer, the fiery colour scheme at the front gives way to romantic pastels, with *Rosa* Windrush (='Ausrush'), *Geranium pratense* 'Mrs Kendall Clark', *Geranium* 'Orion' and *Digitalis purpurea* 'Alba'.

Near the street an oyster-shell path – a reference to a local delicacy – leads around the house. A raised bed along this path is home to a *Pyrus communis* 'Doyenné du Comice', underplanted with cream and purple tulips. Close to the road, these are the first to fall prey to the deer that come into the village. "Given the chance, they'll eat every tulip in the garden," says Hetty. "I do get up at night to check up on them. Stressful times." The deer also like Hetty's other passion – roses.

Arches surrounding the parterre are covered in *Rosa* 'Blush Noisette', *R.* 'Madame Alfred Carrière', *R.* Jasmina (='Korcentex'), *R.* 'Constance Spry' and *R.* 'Félicité Perpétue'. Along the wooden fence – painted black in keeping with the barn – are *R.* 'Fantin-Latour', *R.* 'Blanchefleur' and *R.* 'Tapis Volant', which may flower on into December. In spring, however, seating areas come alive with bulb arrangements in every shape and size. From terracotta pots filled with *Hyacinthus orientalis*, *Tulipa* 'Vincent van Gogh' and *T.* 'Ballerina', to baskets filled with *Gaultheria procumbens* and *Muscari armeniacum* 'Blue Spike'. Buckets, dustbins – even her mum's old salt pot – are put to use. "I do like my stuff," admits Hetty. Stuff it may be, but this is such stuff as dreams are made on. □

USEFUL INFORMATION

Address Duinweg 32, 4356 AS Oostkapelle, the Netherlands.
Tel +31(0)6 2241 7379.
Website romantischerozentuin.nl
Follow Hetty's blog – in English – at dutch-garden-stories.blogspot.nl
Open 24-25 April and 19-20 June, 10am-5pm (€2.50). Groups welcome by appointment from mid April until the end of June (€3.50).

4 bulb combinations

1 Cream of the crop

In her bulb baskets Hetty has planted the eye-catching, deep-pink *Tulipa* 'Abigail', a, peony-flowered tulip with double rows of velvety petals, alongside white *Narcissus* 'Thalia' and the blue and pink forget-me-nots. Baskets such as these were traditionally used to sell bulbs at auction and these ones belonged to Hetty's grandfather. In the foreground is a mix of the raspberry-and-cream streaked, *T.* 'Flaming Purissima', *T.* 'Negrita' and *T.* 'Rosalie'.

2 Jewels in the crown

Here a bold combination of tulips – the fiery *T.* 'Orange Surprise', the romantic white *T.* 'Casablanca' and two purple tulips 'Blue Diamond' and 'Ballade' – are softened by forget-me-nots and the fragrant and self-seeding *Erysimum* 'Progress'. In late spring the tulips in this mix will give way to the orange *T.* 'Prinses Irene' and the delicately striped, greeny yellow *T.* 'Yellow Springgreen'.

3 Warm tones

Yellow and red tulips are a classic colour combination in many Dutch gardens. In borders to the left and right of a pair of *Syringa vulgaris* that frame her front door, Hetty has planted a mix of *T.* 'Striped Bellona', *T.* 'Mickey Mouse', *T.* 'Westpoint' and *T.* 'Ile de France' – their spiky foliage softened by forget-me-nots and bright-green euphorbia.

4 Cool sophistication

In these brick-edged raised beds, which line either side of an oyster-shell path, the colour palette is more muted. Here a host of creamy-white *T.* 'Pays Bas' are dotted with the brownish-purple *T.* 'Fontainebleau' and the almost black *T.* 'Continental', which flowers in April and is a good, early alternative to the classic *T.* 'Queen of Night'. They provide a subtle backdrop for the *Pyrus communis* 'Doyenné du Comice', a pear tree with extremely sweet and juicy fruit.

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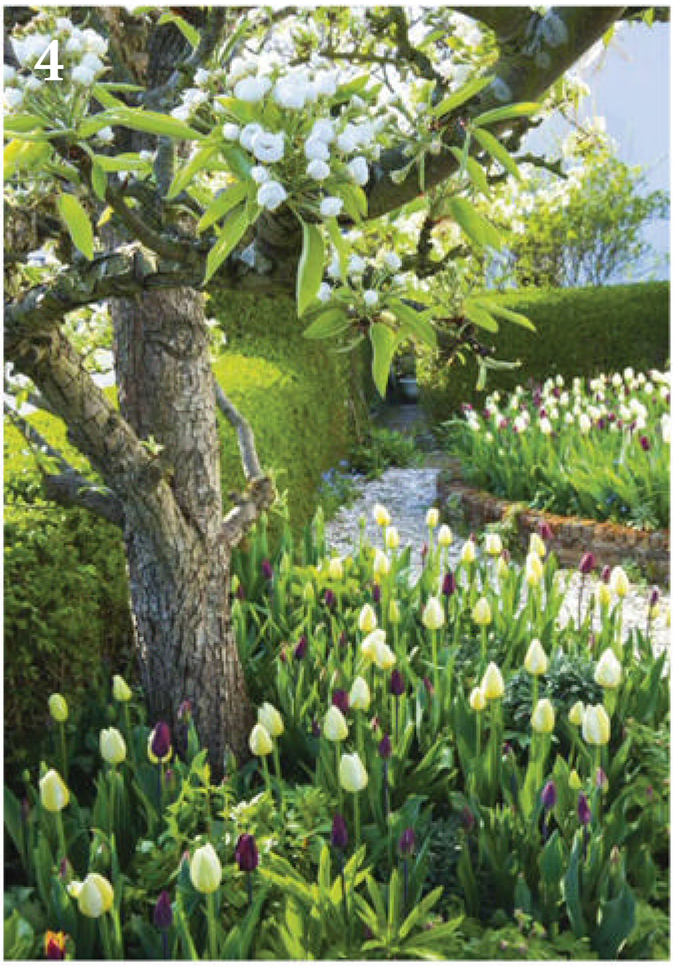
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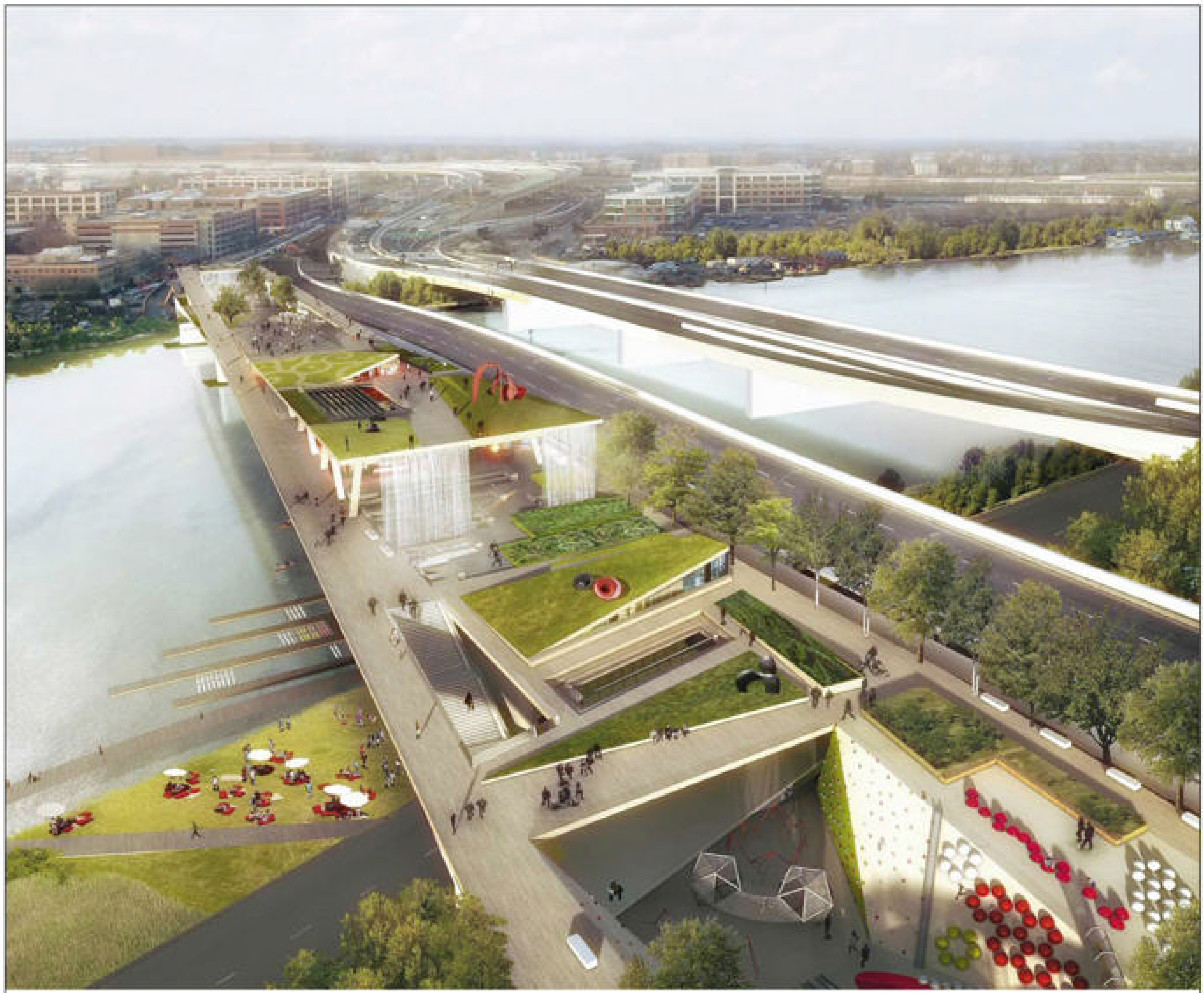
design

Design update, ideas and sourcebook

UPDATE COMPILED BY ANNIE GATTI



NEW DESIGN

Capital heights

The design for Washington DC's first elevated park has been announced. Reusing the old piers for the 11th Street Bridges over the Anacostia River, the new X-shaped structure, designed by OMA + OLIN, will embrace a series of interconnected spaces for play, performance and entertainment and features a central plaza and dramatic waterfalls. It is hoped the bridge will open in 2018. **bridgepark.org**

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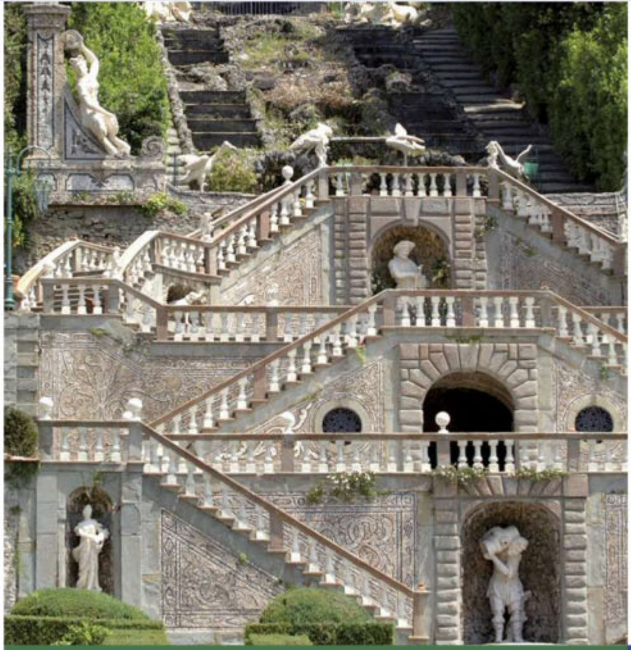
2015: 12 May, 16 Jun, 7 Jul, 8 Sep

AMALFI COAST, CAPRI AND ISCHIA
Visits to: La Mortella, Caserta, Villa Rufolo
2015: 30 April, 4 Jun, 17 Sep

THE VENETO AND VERONA
Visits to: Villa Pisani, Villa Emo, Villa Rizzardi
2015: 3 Jun



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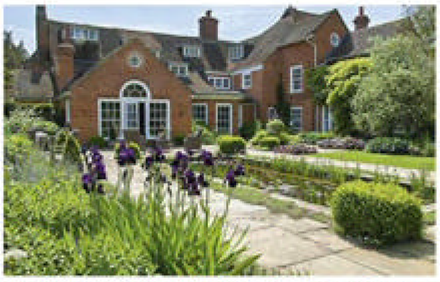
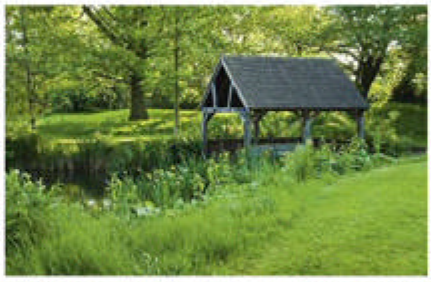
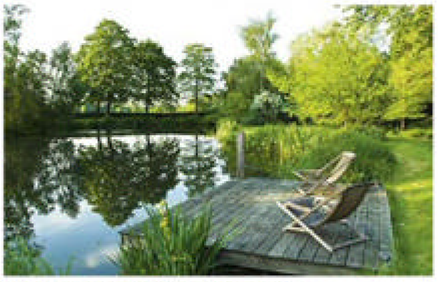
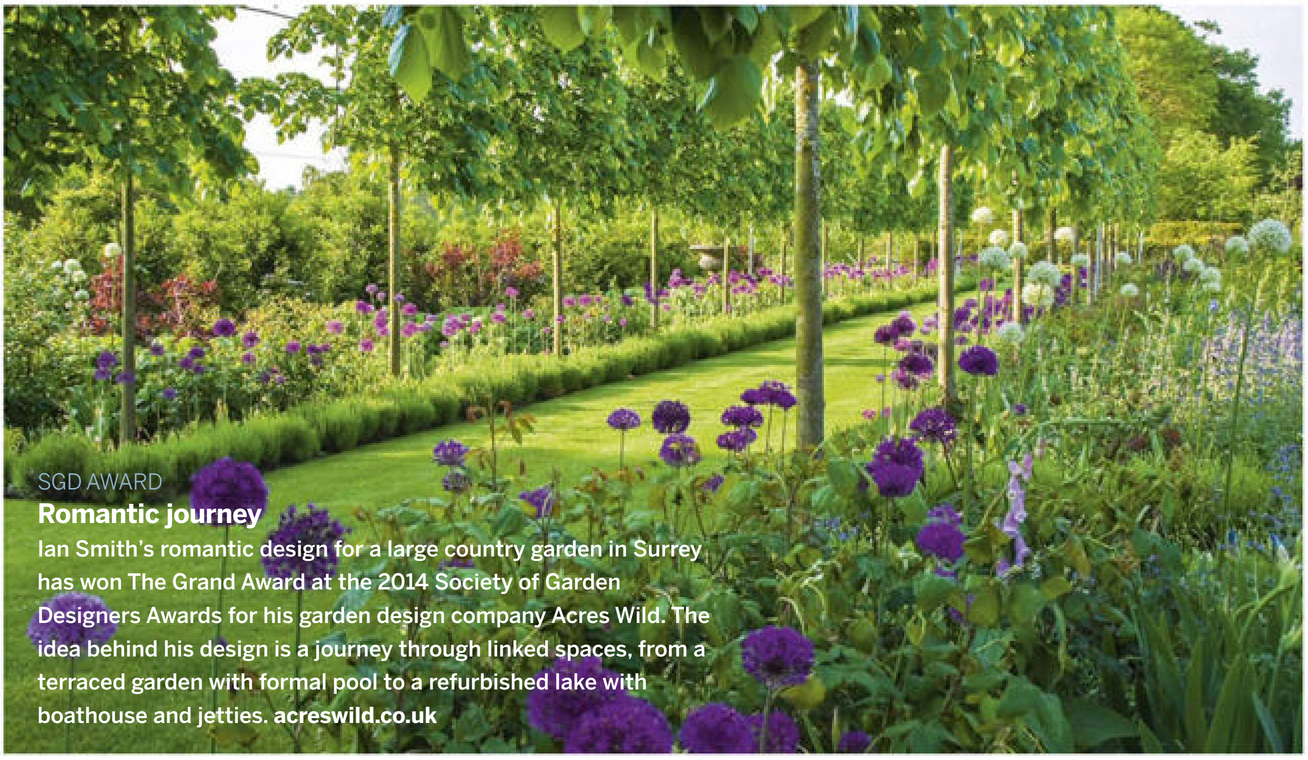




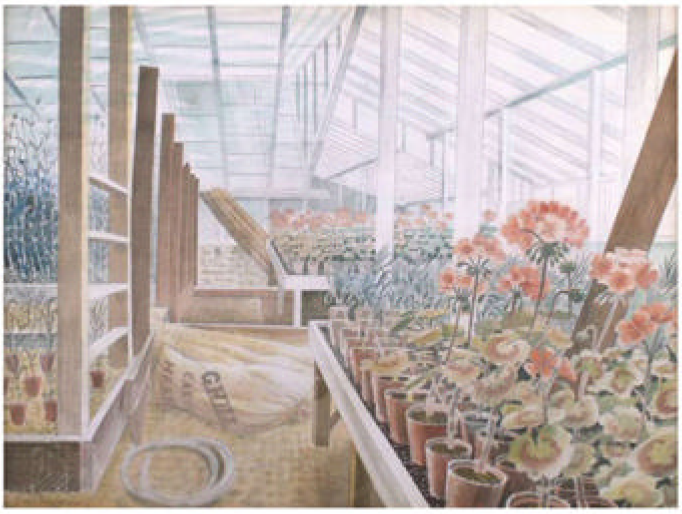




SGD AWARD

Romantic journey

Ian Smith's romantic design for a large country garden in Surrey has won The Grand Award at the 2014 Society of Garden Designers Awards for his garden design company Acres Wild. The idea behind his design is a journey through linked spaces, from a terraced garden with formal pool to a refurbished lake with boathouse and jetties. **acreswild.co.uk**



EXHIBITION

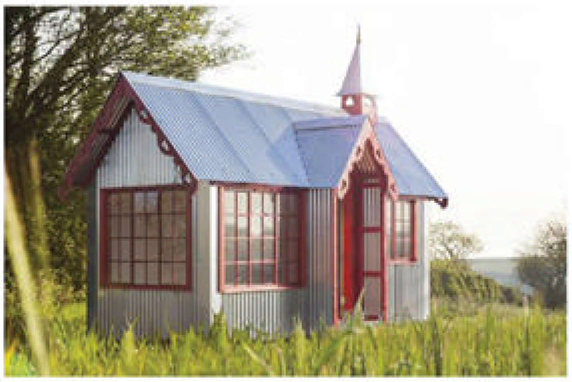
Pot art

A major show of works by the artist and designer Eric Ravilious at the Dulwich Picture Gallery focuses on his watercolours. The selection of more than 90 works includes a rarely seen painting of a woman (thought to be his wife Tirzah) on a bench, and this painting, *Geraniums and Carnations*, which shows the interior of a glasshouse, painted in 1938. Until 31 August. **Tel 020 8693 5254; dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk**

HEAVENLY FEATURES

With its elegant bell spire, oak flooring, porch with inset boot rack, and distinctive wallpaper, this tin tabernacle from Love Lane Caravans, makes a divine garden office. Measuring 5m x 2.3m it can be delivered painted or unpainted.

Available from LASSCO Three Pigeons (**01844 277188, lassco.co.uk**). For prices visit **lovelanecaravans.co.uk**



IAN SMITH, ACRES WILD

REDESIGN

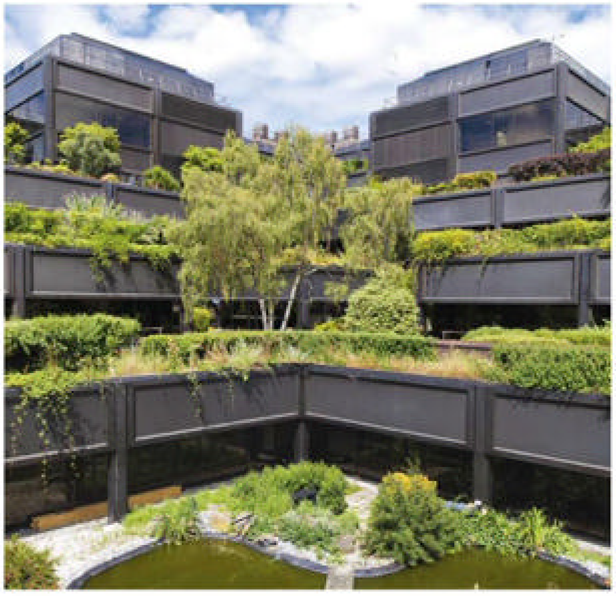
Study in green

Sustainability is at the heart of the vision for the main campus artery at Newcastle University by landscape architects OOBE. The redesign includes a pedestrian-focused environment with a creative approach to surface water and flooding problems including geometric rain gardens. **oobe.co.uk**

EXHIBITION

Fresh Page

The life of one of Britain's most accomplished landscape architects is celebrated in a major exhibition at London's Garden Museum. The late Russell Page (right) was renowned for his designs both for celebrity clients and public parks, including the Festival Gardens for the Festival of Britain in 1951, and the exhibition features photographs, paintings and plans, many from his personal archive. Until 21 June. **Tel 020 7401 8865; gardenmuseum.org.uk**



NATIONAL HERITAGE LIST

Hanging gardens

Mountbatten House (left) in Basingstoke, is one of 14 post-war office buildings recently listed at Grade II by English Heritage. The building, formerly known as Gateway House, was designed by Arup Associates, and is distinguished by its extensive roof gardens, which have also been given Grade II listing. Designed by James Russell, the romantic hanging gardens are laid out over six levels and, on the top level, include a winter garden, a Japanese garden and a herb garden with apple trees.

Notebook

- New work, inspired by research into the DNA of Welsh plants, and created by nine artists from **Sculpture Cymru**, is on display in the grounds of National Botanic Garden of Wales. Until 15 September, gardenofwales.org.uk
- If you're in Manchester take time to visit the art garden, designed by Sarah Price, which surrounds the **Whitworth Art Gallery** and is now open to the public. www.whitworth.manchester.ac.uk
- One of the oldest parts of Bodnant Garden in Conwy, north Wales, has opened to the public after being hidden for more than a century. Designed in the style of William Robinson by Henry Pochin in the 1870s, the nine-acre Himalayan-style **Far End** area includes waterside walks and an arboretum. nationaltrust.org.uk/bodnant-garden
- Join the head gardener of the **Swiss Garden** at Shuttleworth for a tour of the recently restored garden. The Regency landscape holds 13 listed structures including a Swiss Cottage and glass-roofed grotto. 17 April, £25 (including lunch). Tel 01767 627924, shuttleworth.org
- Book now for a four-day, non-residential design workshop on **Sacred Gardens** led by Emma Clark, Tom Bree and Adam Hunt. Visits to local gardens such as Chalice Well in Glastonbury are included. 22-25 May, Wells. £400 (includes lunch). For more information please email info@emma-clark.com

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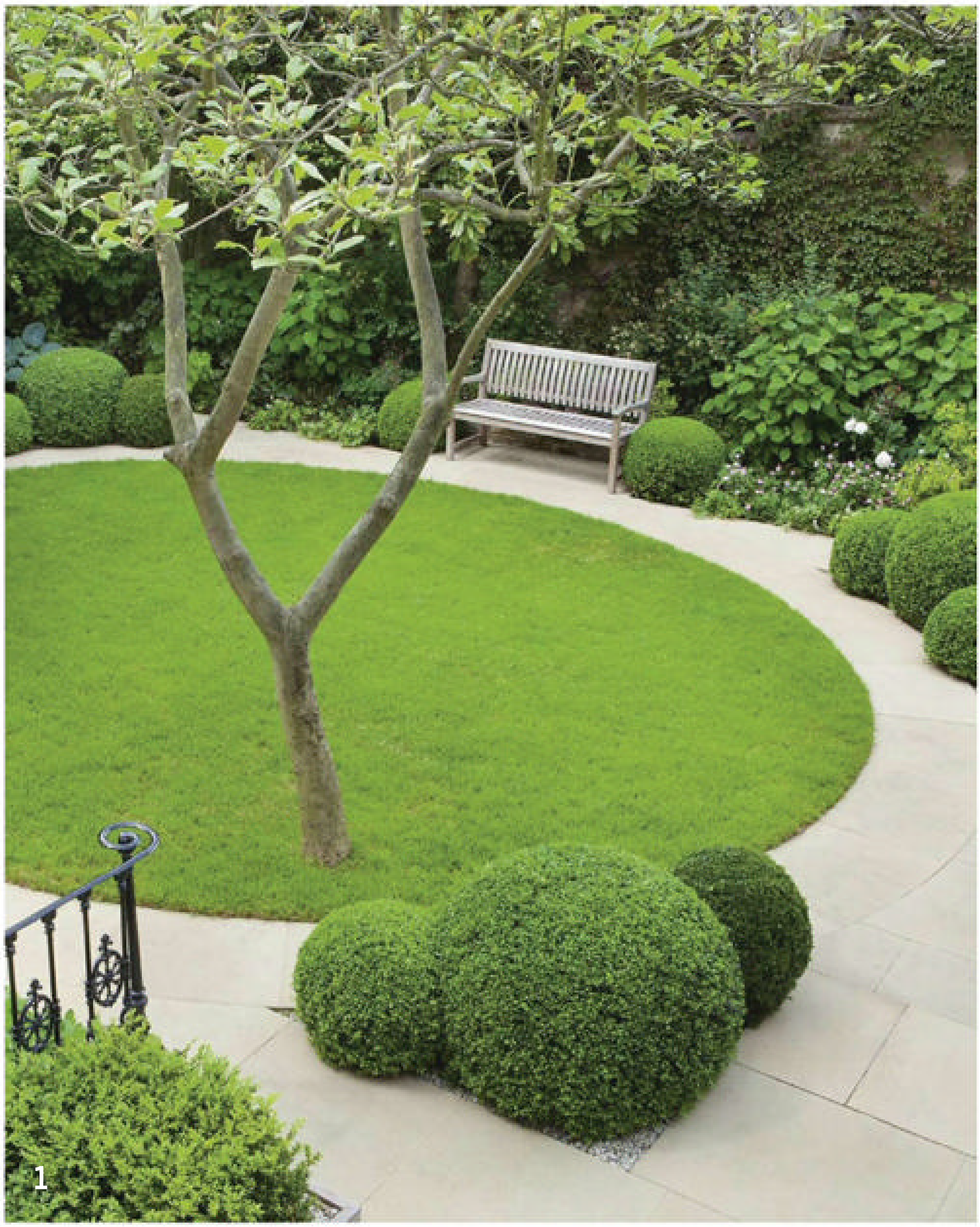
1 Roundabout

The repetition of circles helps to generate unity in this urban garden designed by del Buono Gazerwitz Landscape Architecture. The rounded lawn is echoed by several groups of *Buxus sempervirens*. The different sized balls of box add a playful message and it looks as good in winter as summer.



MARIANNE MAJERUS, DESIGN: DEL BUONO GAZERWITZ LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Annie Guilfoyle is Director of Garden Design at KLC School of Design. She is also Garden Course Co-ordinator at West Dean College and runs her own garden design studio.

Cohesion in the garden

In the last of her Design Ideas series, Annie Guilfoyle looks at how best to bring all the elements of design together

WORDS ANNIE GUILFOYLE

2

3

4

2 MAR ANNE MAJERUS, OLD BLADBEAN STUD, KENT; 3 MAR ANNE MAJERUS, DES GN: JULIE TOLL AND JOHN BROOKES; 4 MARIANNE MAJERUS, SISSINGHURST CASTLE, KENT

2 Border control

It can sometimes be a challenge to successfully pull together the design of a lengthy herbaceous border. These white-painted, wooden obelisks have been positioned in a straight line and each one planted with clematis. This creates a rhythm, as well as providing some height and interest along the border.

3 Hard choices

Combining different types of paving in a garden needs to be carried out with care; or it can end up looking fussy. Triangular brick sections have been used at the Manor House, Ayot St Lawrence (see page 38), to break up areas of gravel. They also tie in well with the brick paving that surrounds the central feature.

4 Room with a view

Taxus baccata hedging divides the garden rooms at Sissinghurst Castle, in Kent. When designing different areas or zones, take a lesson from this iconic garden and try to use the same hedging throughout. That way you will maintain a sense of unity in the garden.

As this is my final article for the Design Ideas series, I'd like to think about how a garden can be made to work as a whole, and in doing so reflect on some of the subjects covered over the past two years.

It will come as no surprise that the most successful gardens are those that have a strong sense of connection or cohesiveness, where individual elements work together to create and underscore a sense of place. As you walk through, there is something that ties the garden together, even if it is divided into a series of rooms or separate spaces. Compare this notion to the way a musical symphony is divided into four movements; each may have a change of tempo or direction yet there remains an underlying dialogue unifying the piece. So how do we accomplish this in a garden?

One way of achieving cohesion is to repeat certain aspects of the design, for example the actual shapes that create the garden layout. A series of circular or square areas may contain different plants or features, but if they share a common outline it will help to unite the garden. Another approach is to use the same hedging around each section or the entire garden. Take Sissinghurst Castle in Kent as an example, the garden was designed as a series of interconnecting outdoor rooms, most of which are linked by the ▷

5 Gravel garden

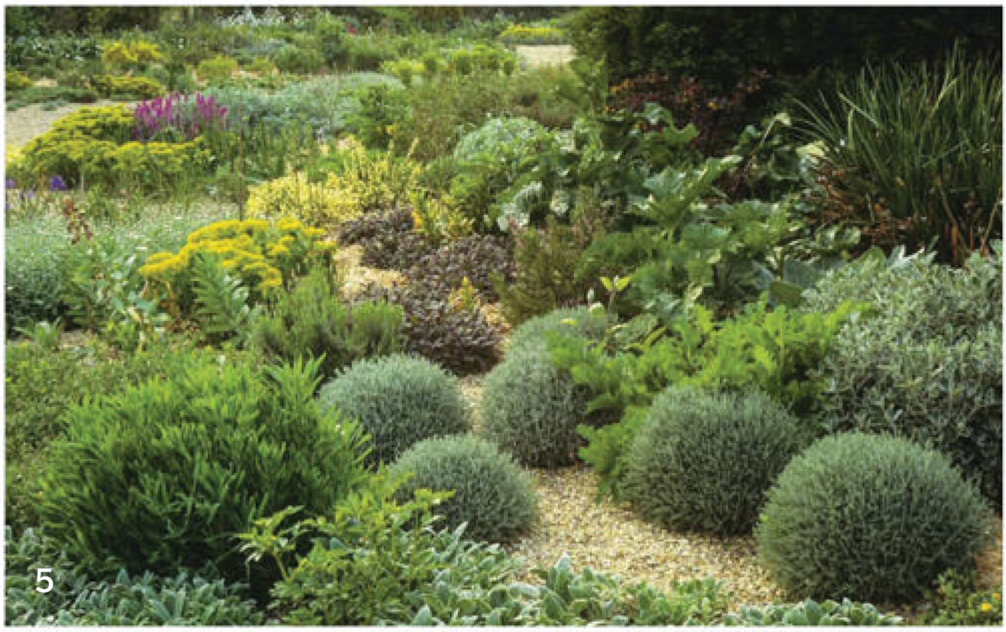
The drought-tolerant planting scheme designed by Beth Chatto for her garden in Essex perfectly demonstrates how effective it can be to repeat plant groupings in a large, open area. As you look across the garden your eye automatically connects the groups together, making the whole appear more cohesive.

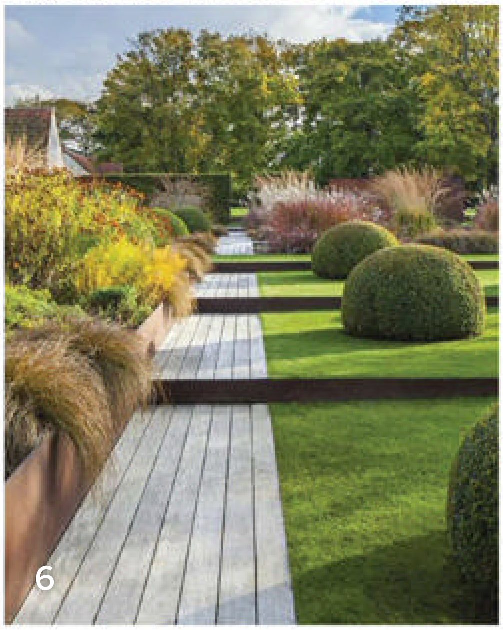
6 Repetition

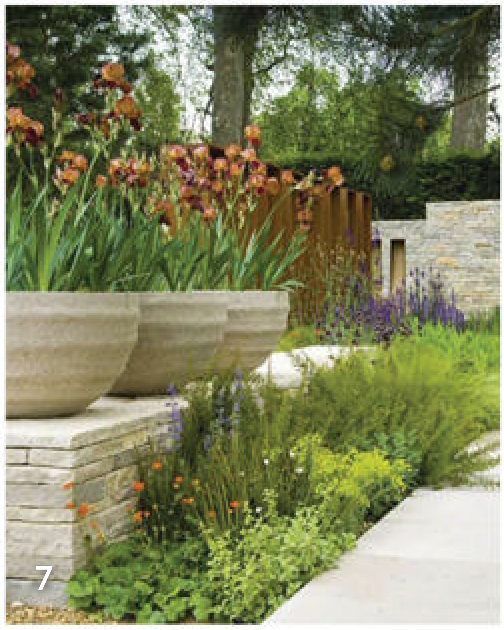
This long path draws the eye towards the distant opening in the hedge. Intersected by Corten steel steps, it links the different levels together. Because these steps also stretch out laterally they forms a connection with the various garden areas.

7 Limited palette

It is little wonder that leading garden designer Andy Sturgeon won a Gold Medal and the coveted Best in Show award at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in 2010 with this stunning design. Demonstrating a perfect example of cohesion, with a restricted colour palette of plants and materials.







5 MAR ANNE MAJERUS, BETH CHATTO GARDENS, ESSEX; 6 MAR ANNE MAJERUS, DESIGN: TOM STUART-SMITH; 7 GAP PHOTOS / MARCUS HARPUR – DESIGN: ANDY STURGEON

▷ impeccably clipped *Taxus baccata* hedging. This hedging not only delineates each area, but also creates a wonderful evergreen backdrop to the garden. The choice of hard-landscape materials could be another element that ties the garden together. Using a limited number of paving materials, repeated throughout, will help to add a sense of continuity. The paving could be laid in a different direction or pattern to change the rhythm but try to ensure the materials remain the same.

Planting design can be an excellent way of creating unity. Repeating certain plants, colours or plant combinations is an extremely effective device. The glorious gravel garden designed by Beth Chatto at her home in Essex demonstrates this idea perfectly. Beth has used simple, evergreen plant groupings that are repeated in gentle waves as you move through the space. These provide definition and punctuation, especially effective as the grasses and perennials come and go.

I have really enjoyed writing this series and hope that the ideas that we have explored have been interesting and informative. Gardens are very personal spaces and at the end of the day they need to work for you, so don't be afraid to occasionally throw the rule book away. □

NEW SERIES starts in the June issue.

GAP PHOTOS / CAROL CASSELDEN

8 Brief encounter

This spectacular display of *Tulipa* 'Shirley' at Great Dixter in East Sussex may only last for a few weeks during late spring, but it creates cohesion in this border, until the next phase of seasonal underplanting. Bulbs are particularly good for achieving this effect.

Further reading

Some very useful books for discovering new ideas and providing practical help with the design process

- *John Brookes Garden Design* by John Brookes (Dorling Kindersley, 1991)
- *John Brookes Garden Design Course* by John Brookes (Mitchell Beazley, 2007)
- *The Book of Garden Plans* by Andrew Wilson (Mitchell Beazley, 2004)
- *The Book of Plans for Small Gardens* by Andrew Wilson (Mitchell Beazley, 2007)
- *The RHS Encyclopedia of Garden Design* (Dorling Kindersley, 2013)

Be inspired

The best way to get ideas for your own garden is to visit lots of great ones. We've listed some of the most inspiring below, but also take a look at those that open for charity under the National Gardens Scheme (ngs.org.uk). You never know the most exciting ideas may be right on your doorstep.

Bury Court Barn, Surrey (burycourtbarn.com)
Derry Watkins' garden, Wiltshire (specialplants.net)
East Ruston Old Vicarage, Norfolk (e-ruston-oldvicaragegardens.co.uk)
Eden Project, Cornwall (edenproject.com)
Great Dixter, East Sussex (greatdixter.co.uk)
Parham House, West Sussex (www.parhaminsussex.co.uk)
RHS Gardens at Harlow Carr, Hyde Hall, Rosemoor and Wisley (rhs.org.uk)
Sissinghurst Castle, Kent (nationaltrust.org.uk)
Trebah Garden, Cornwall (trebahgarden.co.uk)
Turn End, Buckinghamshire (turnend.org.uk)
West Dean, West Sussex (westdean.org.uk)

- Always check before visiting as many of the gardens above open only on certain dates and at specific times.

READER EVENT

Annie Guilfoyle is speaking at the *Gardens Illustrated* Festival. For more details see page 9 or visit **gardensfestival.com**

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GARDENS BY THE SEA

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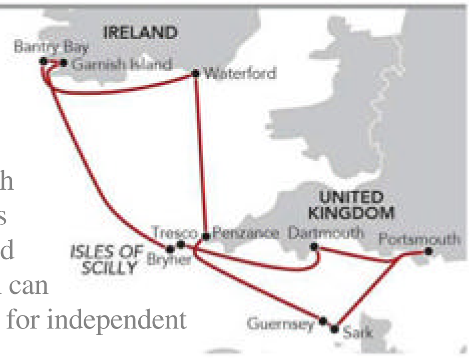

The Itinerary in brief

Day 1 - Portsmouth. Embark this afternoon.

Day 2 - Dartmouth. Awake this morning at our anchorage in the River Dart. On a choice of excursions you may choose to visit 'Greenway', the wonderful historic house and garden that was once home to Agatha Christie. There will be time to explore the gardens, including the Camellia Garden. Alternatively visit the 1920s country retreat of the D'Oyly Carte family at Coleton Fishacre. Lose yourself in the RHS accredited garden by the sea as we wander the paths.

Day 3 - Tresco & Bryher, Isles of Scilly. Spend the morning on traffic free Tresco, walking its idyllic lanes from the beach to the famous subtropical Abbey Gardens. Defying the Atlantic weather, this miracle of a garden is home to more than 20,000 species of plants from over 80 countries. Enjoy time to wander at your own pace, maybe visit the Valhalla collection of ship figureheads from ships wrecked on the islands or relax in the cafe. We return to the ship for lunch and this afternoon visit Bryher, the smallest of the inhabited Isles of Scilly.

Day 4 - Garnish Island and Bantry Bay, Ireland. Sail this morning into the sheltered harbour of Glengariff. Here local boats will take us to Garnish Island and the beautiful Ilnacullin Gardens. The sheltered position and Gulf Stream is favourable to the growth of ornamental plants, many normally only found in sub-tropical or Mediterranean climates. We return by local boats sailing past "Seal Island" the home to 250 common seals before enjoying lunch onboard. This afternoon you may wish to enjoy some free time in the small town or join the excursion to Bantry House where we will explore both the house and gardens.

Day 5 - Waterford. From our berth in the town of Waterford we will drive to Mount Congreve, a spectacular woodland garden on the banks of the River Suir. This privately owned seventy acre garden has a collection of over three thousand trees and shrubs and is particularly stunning in spring when the gardens are awash with magnificent sweeps of flowering azaleas, camellias, magnolias and rhododendrons. Return to the MS Serenissima for lunch and enjoy a free afternoon to explore Waterford.

Day 6 - Penzance. Today we arrive off Penzance, our base for our day in Cornwall. A morning excursion will visit St Michael's Mount, the family home of the St Aubyn's who have resided here since 1647. Cut off from the mainland at high tide, it is a fascinating place with an intriguing history. After lunch onboard join the trip to the beautiful Helford River and the 26 acre ravine garden of Trebah.

Day 7 - Guernsey & Sark, Channel Islands. Arrive this morning on Guernsey, the 'Island of Flowers'. There will be the option of a walking tour of St Peter Port including a visit to Castle Cornet, a 12th century battlement which guards the entrance to St Peter Port Harbour. Alternatively enjoy an island drive including Sausmarez Manor where we can explore the house and subtropical gardens which are the setting for over 200 sculptures by over 90 international artists. Over lunch we sail to Sark where we will use our Zodiacs to land on this peaceful traffic free island. Horse drawn carriages take us along the narrow lanes to the enchanting gardens at La Seigneurie.

Day 8 - Portsmouth. Disembark this morning after breakfast.

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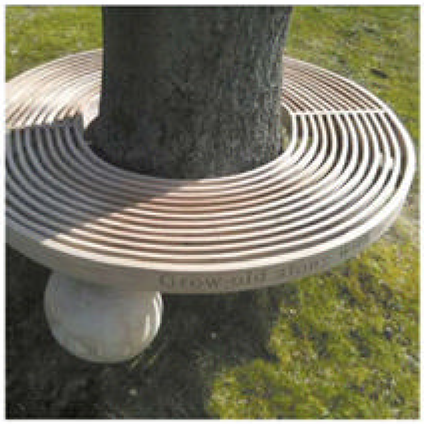

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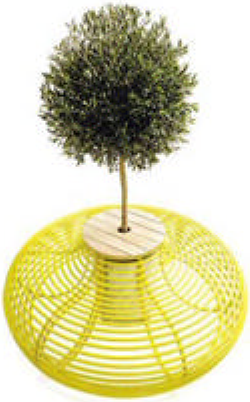

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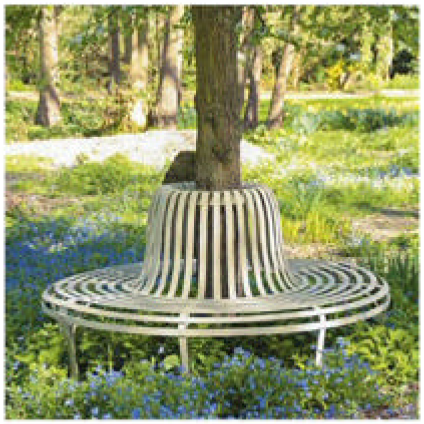
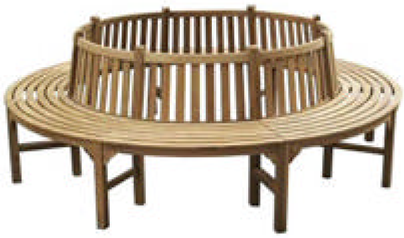


ELEGANT CLASSIC

Circa tree seat, from £1,600,
Sitting Pretty Strapwork,
07746 866677, sittingprettystrapwork.co.uk



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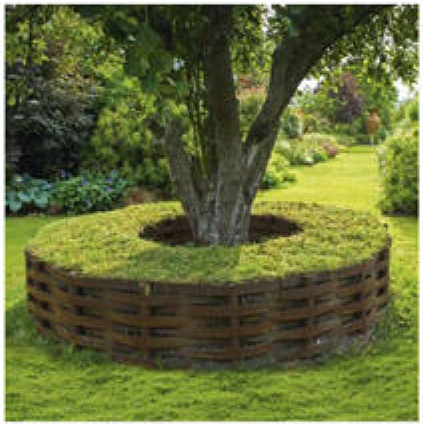
Round teak tree seat, £1,900,
Cyan,
020 8655 6240, cyan-teak-furniture.com



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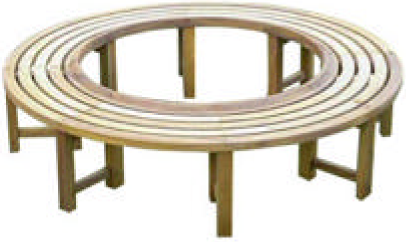
Woven steel with turf top,
from £2,500, Metallurgi,
07775 514885, metallurgi.co.uk



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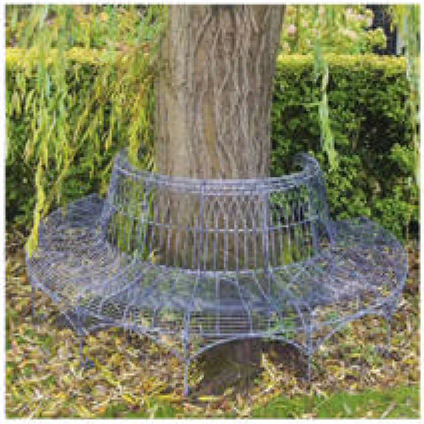
Backless tree seat, from £2,740,
Andrew Crace,
01279 842685, andrewcrace.com



DELICATE WIREWORK

Miers tree seat, £3,200,
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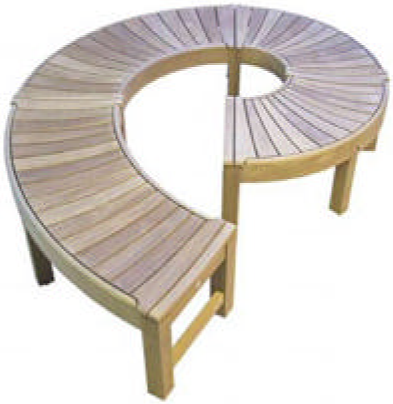
01843 821628, raymentwire.com



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Broadwalk Jubilee Spiral tree seat, £8,640,
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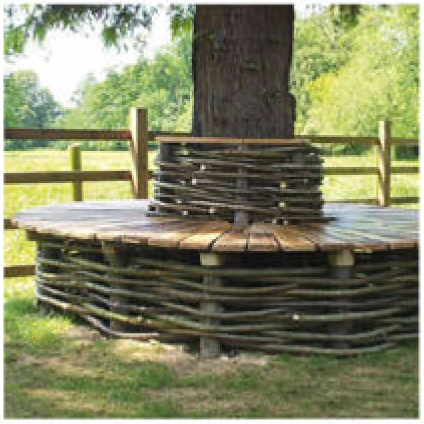
01420 588444, gazeburvill.com



NATURAL LOOK

Oak and hazel tree seat, £900,
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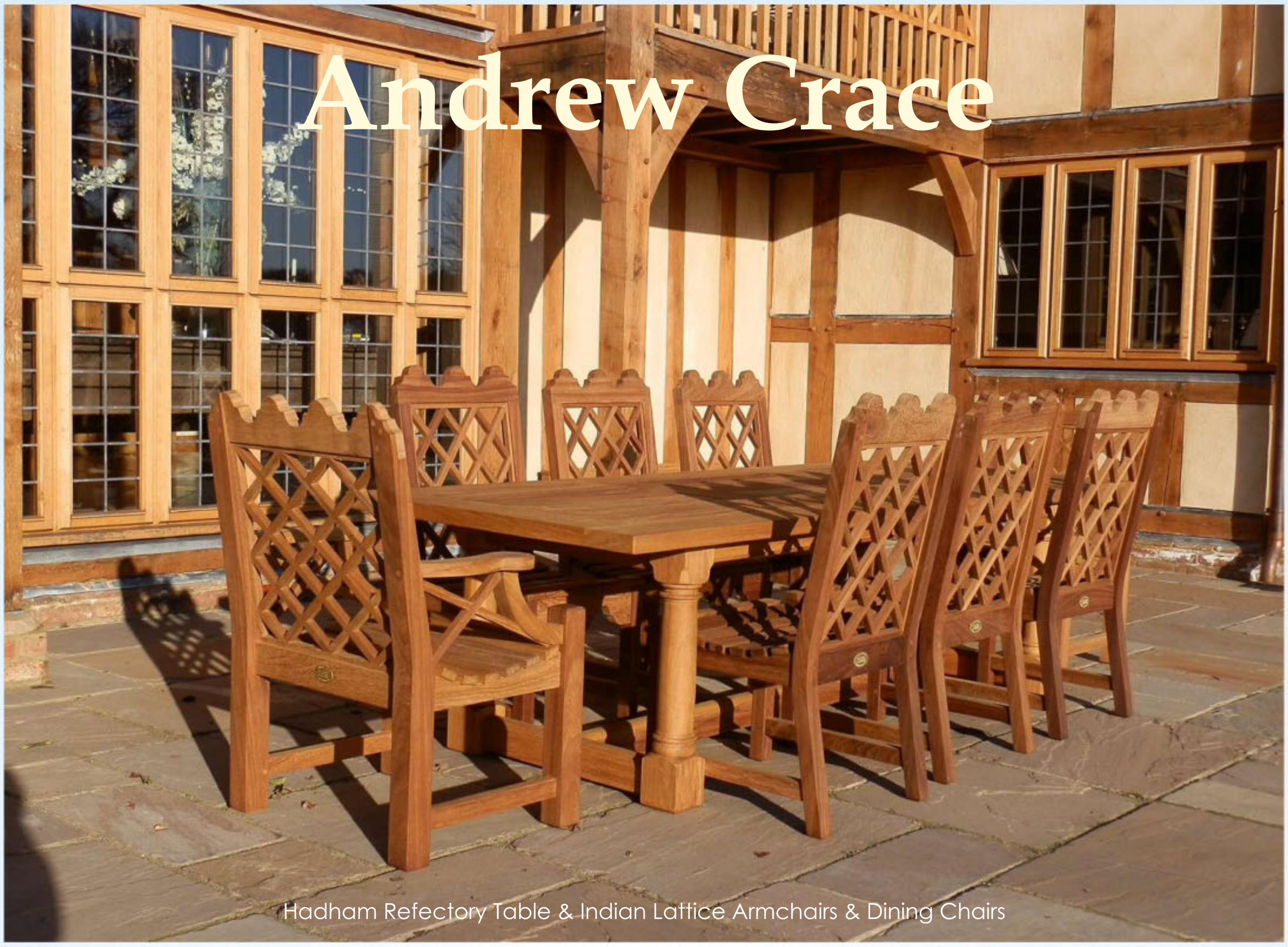

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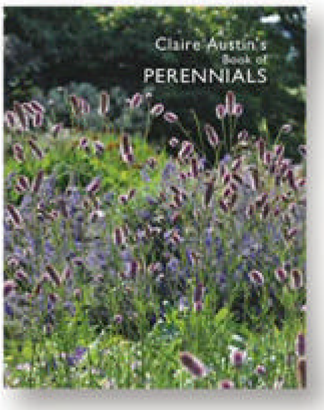
Book reviews, IGPOTY, competitions, offers, crossword, back issues

Piet Oudolf's contemporary-style planting at the Trentham Estate in Staffordshire is examined in *Oudolf Hummelo*, a new book that explores the pioneering designer's influence, reviewed on page 97.

PIET OUDOLF, PHOTOGRAPHER, COURTESY OF THE MONACELLI PRESS

Book reviews



CLAIRE AUSTIN'S BOOK OF PERENNIALS

by Claire Austin

White Hopton Publications, £19
ISBN 978-0993164705

A fully illustrated selection of hardy perennials, chosen for their reliability with advice on how and where to grow.

Reviewer Paula McWaters is a gardening writer and editor.

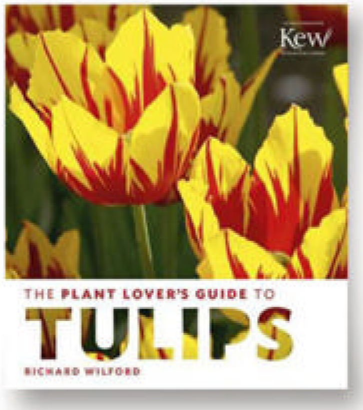
As the daughter of rose growing supremo David Austin, Claire Austin has horticulture running through her veins and this book is a distillation of all she has learned through hands-on experience, over 30 years of perennial plant growing. The rurality of her nursery, in open country on the Shropshire-Welsh borders, gives her plenty of space to trial plants for their garden worthiness, so it is plain that she speaks from her own close observations about the 800 perennials recommended here.

The book is divided into an alphabetical directory of plants, prefaced by a practical section exploring how to approach border design and combine perennials to best effect, plus short introductions to planting, maintenance, propagating, pests and diseases. It's well illustrated, with clear photographs taken by Claire in her own garden and nursery. Care has been taken to ensure pictures appear on the same page as their descriptions, which, in this respect, makes it as easy and useful to refer to as a plant catalogue. Accompanying notes tell you the best site and conditions for each plant and whether or not it is good for cutting and for attracting wildlife.

It is not an exhaustive directory – encyclopaedias of hardy perennials list many more – but as this is a 'take it from one who knows' kind of list, it still contains enough to sustain the interest of fairly experienced gardeners, while not overwhelming less knowledgeable ones. Irises and peonies get a very generous billing, as Claire is a specialist in both. Separate sections are devoted to choosing and growing these.

The front sections get to the point without becoming too bogged down in detail, so the information is easy to access and I found the 'plants for…' lists helpful, especially the 'essential perennials month by month'.

RRP £19. Available to buy from **claireaustin-hardyplants.co.uk** at the **special offer price of £17,** including p&p, until 30 April 2015.



THE PLANT LOVER'S GUIDE TO TULIPS

by Richard Wilford

Timber Press, £17.99
ISBN 978-1604695342

An excellent handbook that gives you the knowledge and inspiration to experiment with different tulips.

Reviewer Kristy Ramage is a designer and writer.

Within a very neat format, this detailed book delivers an impressive amount of useful advice on choosing and growing one of the most beguiling of all flowers. Richard Wilford writes with succinct authority, distilling for us all the information that is really useful for gardeners to know. It's not surprising that you feel you're in safe hands; Wilford is drawing on 26 years of experience of growing and researching tulips at Kew.

As well as covering design, history and classification, and how best to grow and propagate tulips, the middle section offers vibrant photographs and notes that give a full description of 100 different tulips, alongside thoughtful and pertinent observations. In the design suggestion for the marvellous *Tulipa sprengeri*, for example, the suggestion is to 'combine informally with late-spring perennials or it can be grown in grass where the bright blooms will peer through the waving leaves.' Wilford notes its preference for 'light shade and fertile soil that retains moisture year round' (most tulips prefer to be dry in summer) and advises 'the most successful way to introduce this plant is to scatter seed where you want it to flower'.

The book is lavishly illustrated with photographs, many taken by the author himself. These show a wide selection of different planting combinations, as well as the individual tulips. Of course there are many, many more individual tulips that one would have loved to have seen included, but there is great breadth in the selection that are featured. In fact, by giving you so many examples, and also a greater understanding of the origins and the characteristics of cultivar groups, this book leaves you better equipped to assess other tulips yourself, and to make successful choices from the vast array of tulips that are available.

Book offer
RRP £17.99. **Reader offer price £16.50** including p&p.

THE IRISH GARDEN

by Jane Powers,
photography by
Jonathan Hession

Frances Lincoln, £40
ISBN 978-0711232228

Atmospheric photography and insightful introduction to 60 of the most beautiful gardens across the island of Ireland.

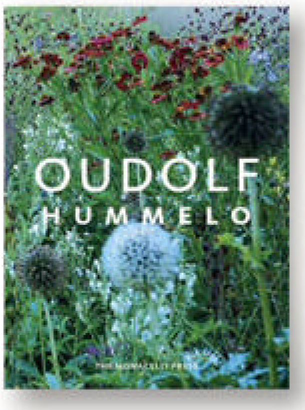
Reviewer Annie Gatti is a garden writer and editor.

In her introduction to this glorious book, Jane Powers makes the bold claim that Irish gardens, blessed with a 'soft' climate that includes lashings of rain, are unlike any others in the world. She then goes on, assisted by evocative images taken by her husband photographer Jonathan Hession, to show why. Garden lovers who have never visited Irish gardens might well be surprised to find the tallest box hedges in the world (Birr Castle), monkey puzzle trees forming avenues (Woodstock) and Dicksonias grown as a forest (Kells Lodge). There are stories of spirited garden makers, many of them women, who used pickaxes to hack out planting areas, moved public roads to retain views, and built follies worthy of Stowe.

The book is divided into themed sections, opening with the grand demesnes of the Anglo-Irish gentry who spared no cost to stock their gardens with rare finds from around the world. Contemporary gardens are here too, including Helen Dillon's planterly acre in Dublin.

There is a synchrony of text and images that should be the blueprint for future books of this kind. The author vividly brings the story of each garden's creation to life, packing her accounts full of year-round horticultural and structural detail, while her husband's images, suffused with the light unique to Ireland, captures these very elements on a particular day, in a particular season. It's not, however, a rose-tinted account, and the dereliction of some of the great gardens, and their houses, is a leitmotif. The final pages of the book celebrate several recent restorations, including Oakfield Park in Donegal where the owners have replanted tens of thousands of trees, including 160 types of oak. All the featured gardens are open to the public so plan your itinerary now.

Book offer
RRP £40. **Reader offer price £37** including p&p.



OUDOLF HUMMELO

by Piet Oudolf and
Noël Kingsbury

Monacelli Press, £40
ISBN 978-1580934183

The fascinating story of garden making over the past 50 years is told through the work of one of its most important pioneers.

Reviewer John Hoyland is a writer and plantsman.

Piet Oudolf, the Dutch garden and landscape designer, is probably the best-known member of his profession. His work on the High Line in New York, the Lurie Garden in Chicago, Scampston Hall in Britain and dozens of other public spaces has brought him to the forefront of public attention.

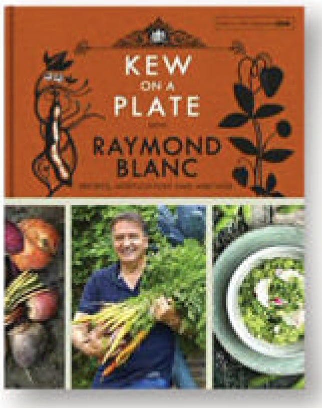
Author Noël Kingsbury has been friend and collaborator to Oudolf for more than 20 years and is well placed to describe the designer's work and his evolving design and planting style. Centred around Oudolf's home, Hummelo, the book charts the creation and development over 35 years, in partnership with his wife Anja, of their nursery, plant breeding programme and design business. But this is no dry biography, but rather an exploration of the individuals, places and objects that influence him and his work.

Oudolf is part of a movement too varied to be categorised but which takes inspiration from nature and whose underlying tenets are sustainability and biodiversity. Woven through the book are the strands of influence of nurserymen, plant breeders, writers, philosophers, artists and garden makers, all of whom have shaped and encouraged this movement in general and Oudolf in particular.

The book contains sumptuous photographs of Oudolf's work as well as enchanting and informal snapshots of the places and personalities that have accompanied his professional journey. Beth Chatto laughing with the late landscape architect Mien Ruys, the building work at the Bury Court garden and Oudolf's collection of toy figurines are just some of the images that make the book as visually appealing as its text makes it inspiring and informative.

Book offer
RRP £40. **Reader offer price £37** including p&p.

Book reviews



KEW ON A PLATE
by Raymond Blanc with
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Headline, £25
ISBN 978-1472224378

Delicious recipes and advice on how to best use your vegetable crop from the two Michelin-starred chef Raymond Blanc.

Reviewer Lia Leendertz is a garden writer and allotmenteer.

Raymond Blanc has put his garden at his Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons restaurant at the centre of his cooking. For many years he – with his two Michelin-starred palate and a small army of chef tasters – has carried out extensive taste trials of vegetables to find the best varieties for various purposes. This makes any gardening book he is involved with an exciting prospect for gardeners that eat what they grow.

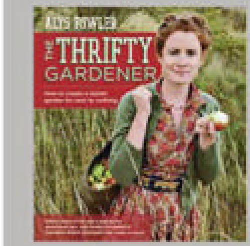
The book has been created to accompany a new BBC series *Kew on a Plate*, about the garden Blanc has created at Kew alongside Kew gardeners, designed to show off heritage vegetable varieties. So there is plenty of cast-iron horticultural advice here. There are also some lovely historical titbits about Kew's relationship with particular food plants, such as the mutual interest Charles Darwin and long-time Kew director Joseph Hooker shared in gooseberries, Hooker visiting Darwin at gooseberry time every year, and eating gooseberries with the Darwin children in the kitchen garden.

But really it is Blanc's insights on vegetable and fruit varieties and how to use them that make this book so satisfying. For instance: in the section on potatoes Blanc does not just make a list of his favourite varieties, but makes several lists for each of roasting, sautéing, mashing and salads; in the section on tomatoes you'll find the best for sauces, stuffing, salads, and his famous 'tomato essence' dish. If you want to know the finest variety of apple for making tarte tatin, it's here. And Blanc should know. Everything is written from the point of view of the kitchen, and there are a number of beautiful-looking recipes alongside each crop. The link between growing food and getting it to the table in the most delicious possible state is so often overlooked. This book redresses this balance beautifully.

Book offer
RRP £25. **Reader offer price £23.50** including p&p.

Other books

From cost-cutting secrets for creating a dream garden to cutting-edge design in some of the most secret of gardens



THE THRIFTY GARDENER
by Alys Fowler
Kyle Books, £16.99
ISBN 978-0857832894

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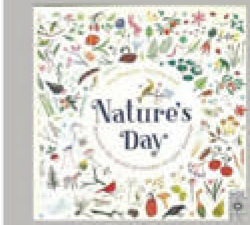
Clever ideas on how to create the garden of your dreams for next to nothing, from one of *Gardens Illustrated*'s contributing editors.



NATURE'S DAY
by Kay Maguire,
illustrations by Danielle Kroll
Wide Eyed Editions, £14.99
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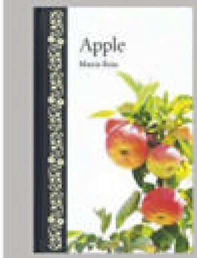

APPLE
by Marcia Reiss
Reaktion Books, £16
ISBN 978-1780233406

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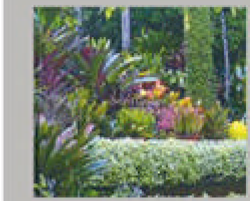
The latest in the excellent Reaktion series examines the mythology and history of this sweet source of temptation.



SECRET GARDENS
by Alain Le Toquin
Abrams Books, £30
ISBN 978-1419715808

OFFER PRICE **£27.50**

Beautiful photography offers an insight into private gardens from around the world that are not normally open to the public.

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WINNERS 2015

International Garden Photographer of the Year

In association with *Gardens Illustrated*, The National Trust, Garden World Images and The Royal Photographic Society

The overall winner of the International Garden Photographer of the Year (IGPOTY) 2015 is Magdalena Wasiczek. Her image (right) captures the fading yet structural glory of *Hydrangea anomala* subsp. *petiolaris* against a background of rich autumnal colours and golden light. Garden photographer and judge Clive Nichols commented: "What I particularly like is the way the photographer has melted the rich purples and oranges of the hydrangea into the out-of-focus background, creating a delicious mélange of colours."

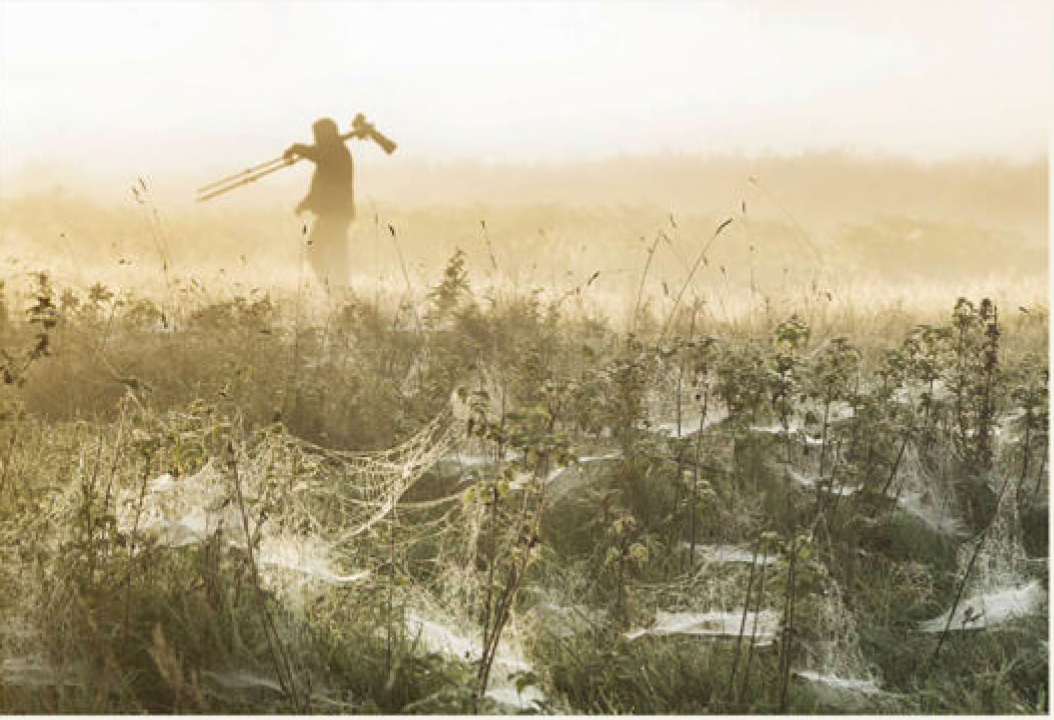
Alongside Magdalena's photograph, we have selected images from ten of IGPOTY's 15 categories, whose winners show a widening international reach and give us a glimpse of the glory of gardens, plants and natural landscapes from around the world.

A fuller range of winning and shortlisted photographs is on display in a exhibition touring the country – see right for details.

• Prints of IGPOTY images are available to buy. Details at igpoty.com/buyprints. There is also a book of the best images from this year's entries (£18.99), see igpoty.com/shop.asp

INTERNATIONAL
GARDEN
PHOTOGRAPHER
OF THE YEAR
IMAGES OF A GREEN PLANET

THIS YEAR'S EXHIBITION APPEARS AT
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew (until 6 April)
Rievaulx Terrace, Yorkshire (until 20 April)
Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh (until 20 June)
Sheringham Park, Norfolk (26 June – 6 September)
For further dates see igpoty.com

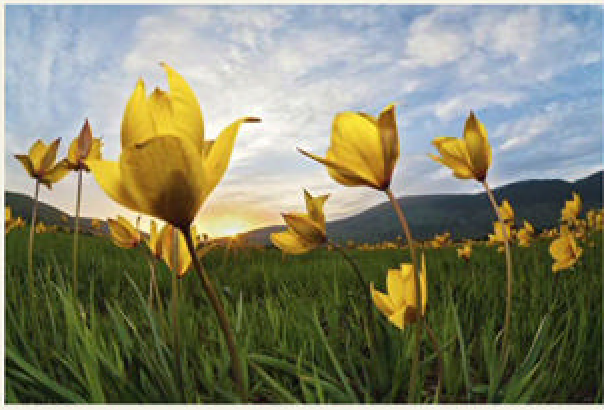


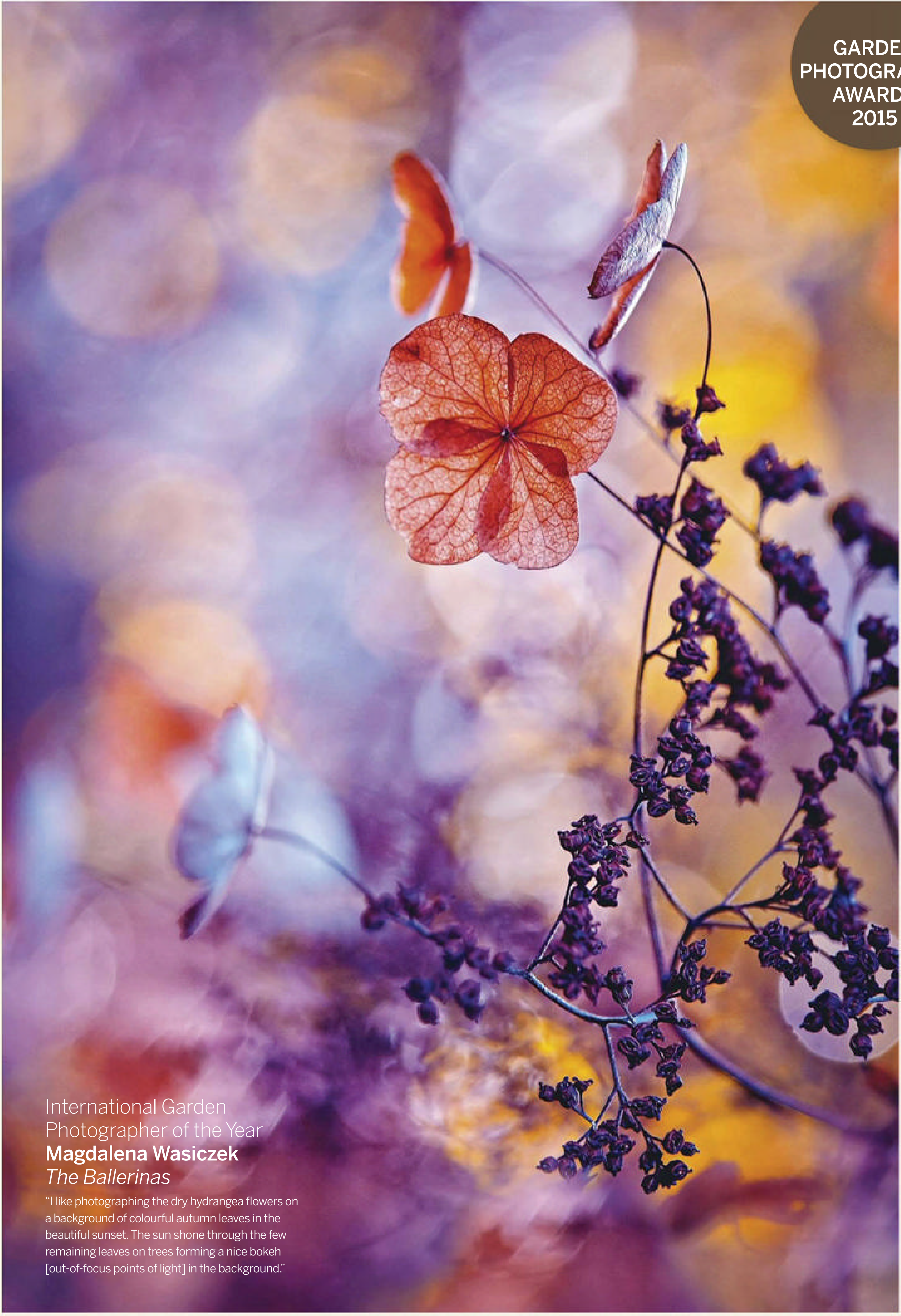
Breathing Spaces △
Duncan Herring *Web Spinners and Deer Stalkers*

"I took this photo while shooting the annual deer rut at Bushy Park. I had arrived at the park for sunrise and had been following various stags around for an hour trying to capture them in the magical golden light and heavy mist. Then out of the corner of my eye I saw the figure of another photographer strolling off after the deer. I just had time to crouch down, frame and release the shutter."

Wildflower Landscapes ▽
Leonardo Battista
Tulipa sylvestris

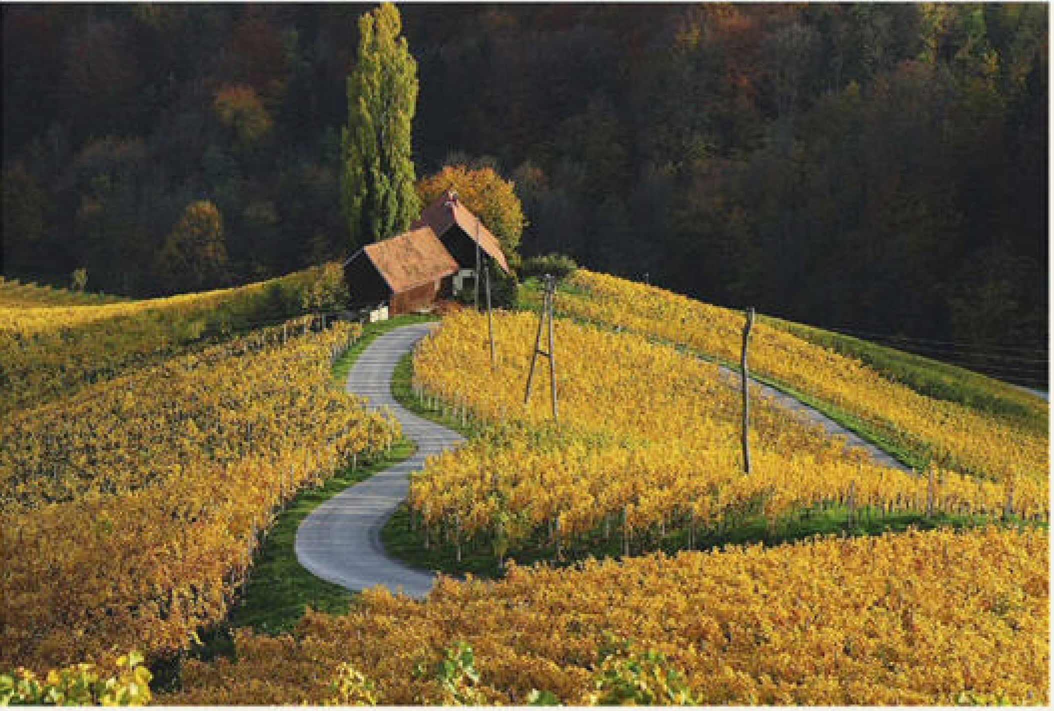
"I was driving through Gargano National Park in Italy on my way home when I noticed a field with numerous yellow tulip flowers (*Tulipa sylvestris*). It was almost sunset and the sun was about to disappear behind the hills. The photo was taken in a wheat field. The shallow ploughing does not damage the bulbs and allows the reproduction of the species."

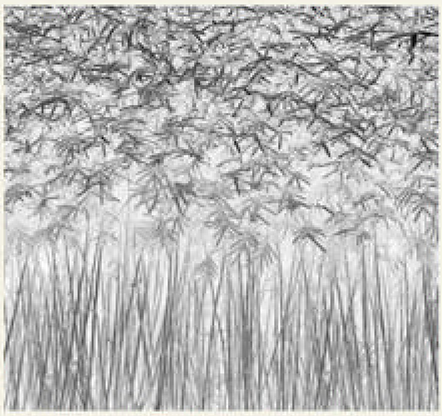




International Garden
Photographer of the Year
Magdalena Wasiczek
The Ballerinas

"I like photographing the dry hydrangea flowers on a background of colourful autumn leaves in the beautiful sunset. The sun shone through the few remaining leaves on trees forming a nice bokeh [out-of-focus points of light] in the background."





Monochrome △
Jefflin Ling *Parallelism*

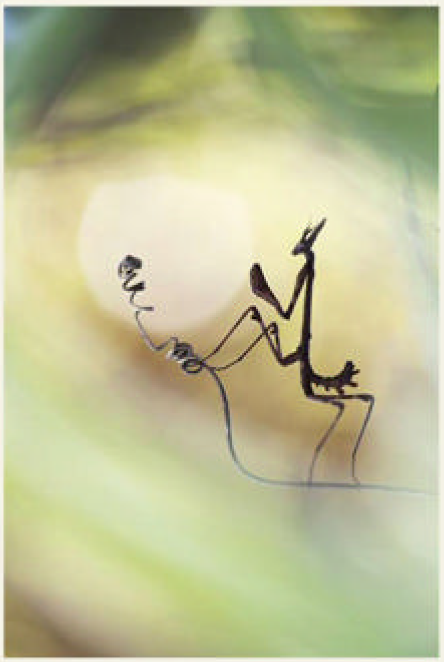
"I used a gradient tool in software to convert this image of bamboo in Malaysia to black and white."

Bountiful Earth △
Albert Ceolan *Vineyards*

"I was driving near the Slovenian-Austrian border, when I came across this road, which formed a beautiful heart surrounded by a vineyard. In the raking light of sunset, the colours of the vineyards in contrast to the intense green of the meadows emphasised the heart shape."

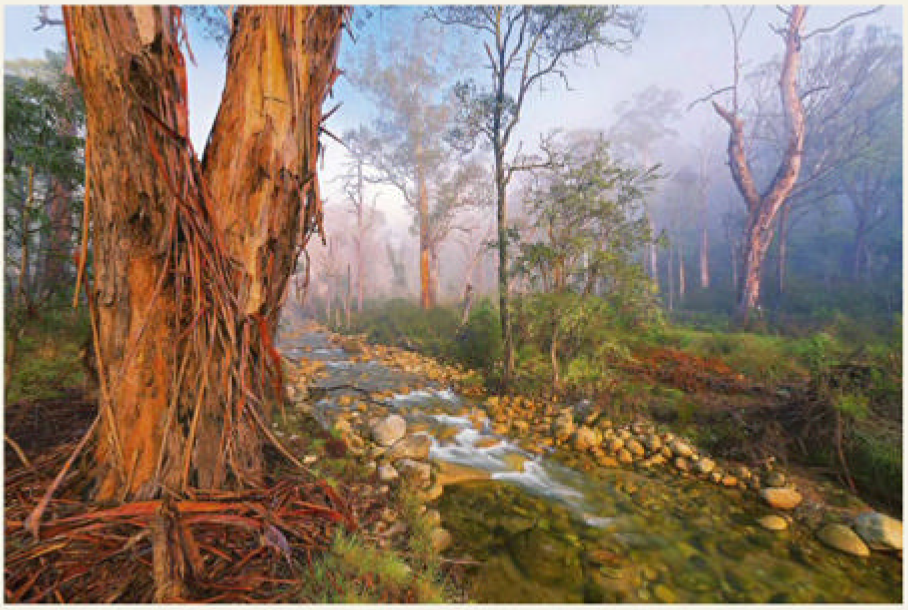
Trees, Woods & Forests ▷
Mark Gray *Mystic Forest*

"I discovered this stunning location while driving back down Mount Buffalo [in Australia] and we entered some thick fog with amazing, soft light streaming through. We found this mystical scene, which although hidden from view was only metres from the road."



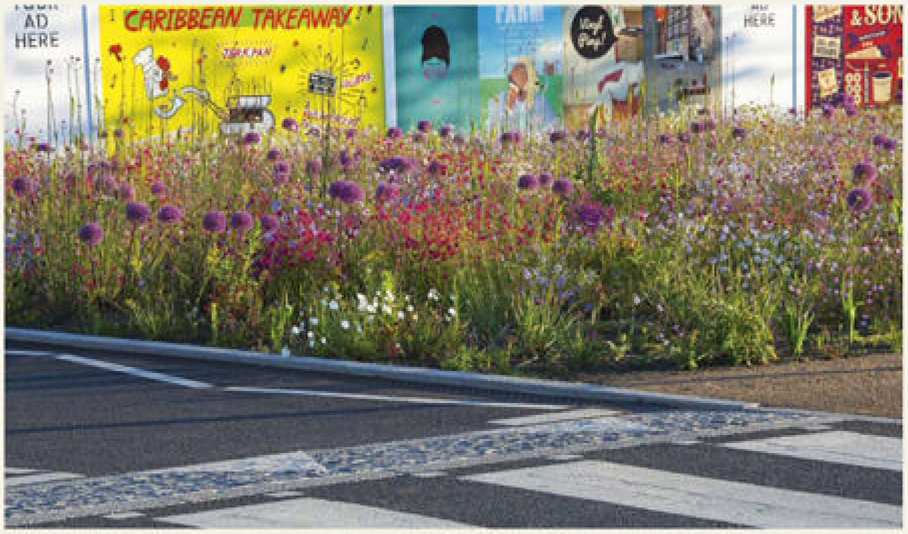
Wildlife in the Garden △
Patrick Goujon
Empusa pennata

"This is a juvenile empuse or conehead mantis in the dry grass in my garden in the south of France. During the first day of spring young empuses climb up twigs to warm in the sun after the cold winter."



Greening the City ▽
Marianne Majerus *Finger-licking Meadow*

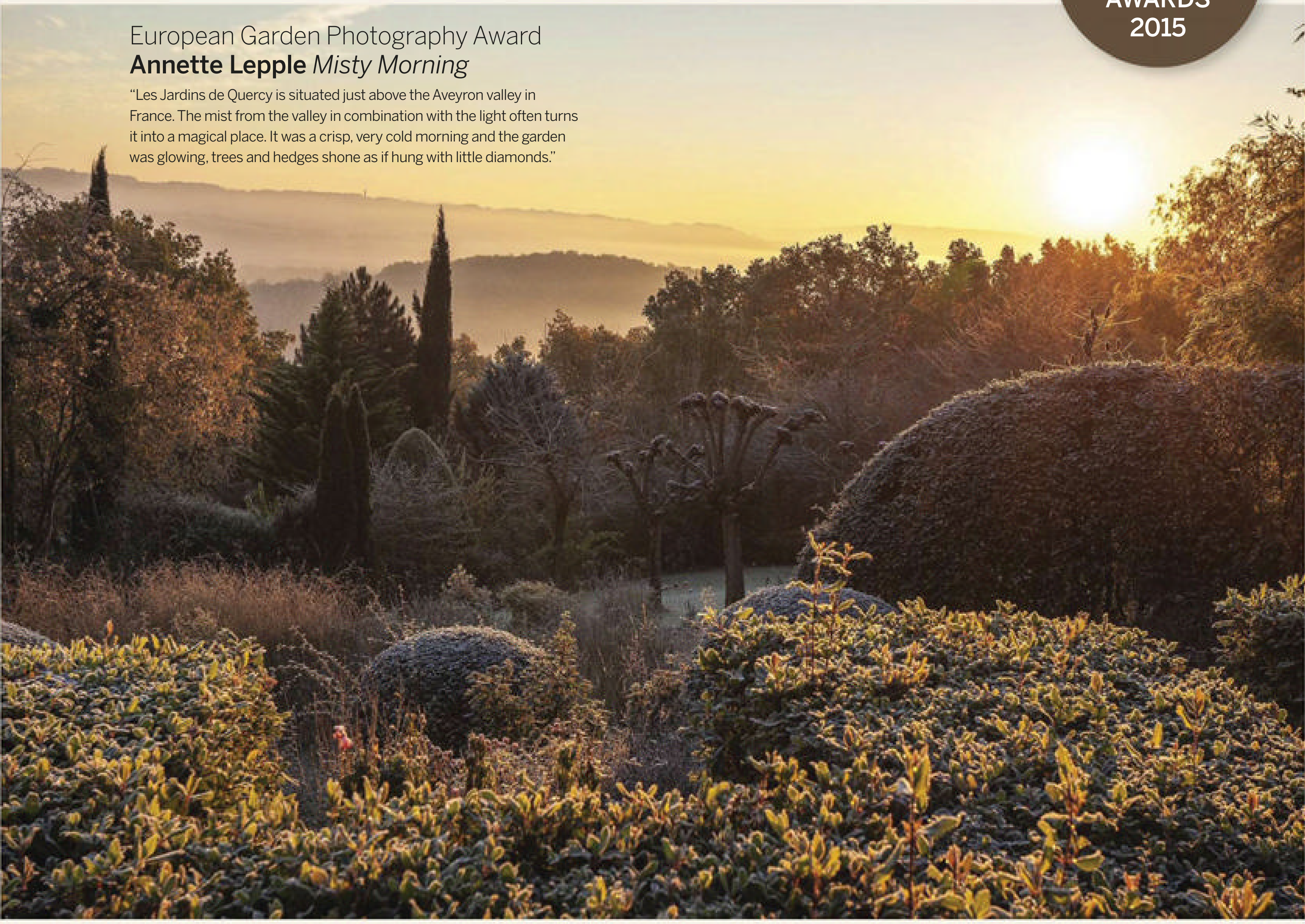
"This was a pictorial meadow conceived by [planting designer] Nigel Dunnett in a cosmopolitan environment adjacent to a building site and zebra crossing just outside the Olympic Park in east London. Cheerful planting punctuated by heads of *Allium* 'Globemaster' perform a calypso dance against a background of colourful hoardings evoking flavours of the Caribbean."



European Garden Photography Award

Annette Lepple *Misty Morning*

"Les Jardins de Quercy is situated just above the Aveyron valley in France. The mist from the valley in combination with the light often turns it into a magical place. It was a crisp, very cold morning and the garden was glowing, trees and hedges shone as if hung with little diamonds."

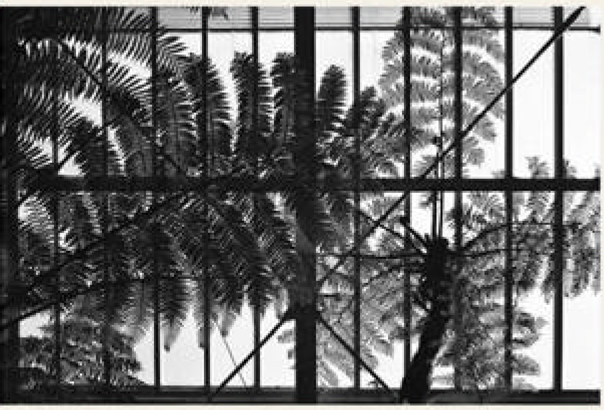


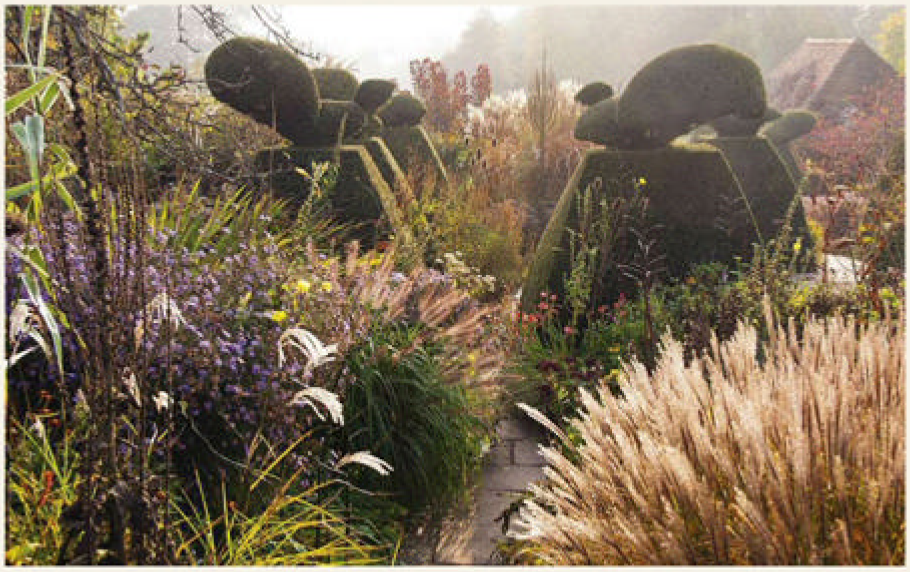
▽ Young Garden Photographer of the Year

Zerina Kaps (aged 15)

Palm House

"This is the palm house of the Botanical Garden in Berlin. I love the size of the plants – and the palm house itself."





Beautiful Gardens △

Carol Casselden *Autumn Colour in the Peacock Garden*

"I was particularly attracted to the subtle shades and forms set against the formal structure of the peacock topiary at Great Dixter. I had just to wait for the soft afternoon light to reveal the beauty of the teasels and grasses that overflowed the path and beyond."

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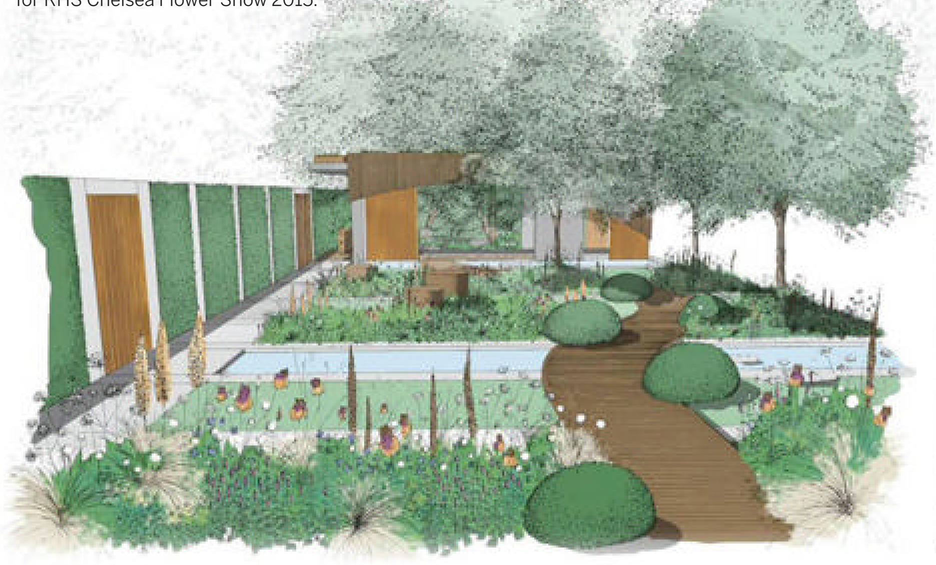
Reader offers

WIN tickets to the RHS Chelsea Flower Show and a hotel stay



Adam Frost's design for the Homebase Urban Retreat Garden for RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2015.

Enjoy dinner, bed and breakfast at the Pestana Chelsea Bridge Hotel & Spa.

Designer Adam Frost could be showing you around the Homebase garden.

Enter our competition and you could be visiting the RHS Chelsea Flower Show this May to spend the day browsing the very best in garden design, plants and garden accessories.

The Prize

Homebase is offering three readers the chance to each win a pair of tickets to the 2015 RHS Chelsea Flower Show on Thursday 21 May, along with an exclusive private tour of the Homebase Garden with the show garden's designer Adam Frost. The prize also includes overnight accommodation on 21 May with dinner and breakfast at the four-star luxury Pestana Chelsea Bridge Hotel & Spa, located just a five-minute walk from the showground (pestana.com).

Adam Frost's 2015 garden for Homebase

This year gold-winning designer Adam Frost is creating a striking modernist garden inspired by the Bauhaus movement. Designed as an urban community garden, the Homebase Urban Retreat Garden will celebrate the principles of the early 20th-century design movement by incorporating modernist materials with simple geometric shapes to create a space that sits comfortably within an urban setting and in which both the local community and wildlife can flourish.

Adam's design includes two striking water walls leading into long pools of water, which can double as paddling pools in summer, and a series of layered cedar wood seats.

The focal point at the rear of the garden will be a striking Corten steel structure set among a bed of tree ferns. Designed to represent a modernist building, the frame will create an insect hotel and home for birds and wildlife.

In front, a commanding cedar-clad building will provide a unique viewing area from its roof offering a second perspective of the garden.

You can find out more about Adam's garden by visiting **homebase.co.uk**

HOW TO ENTER

For your chance to win, answer the following question:

How many main show gardens are there due to be at Chelsea this year?

A 21 **B** 11 **C** 15

By post Send your answer on a postcard, along with your name, address, telephone number and/or email to Gardens Illustrated 220/ Chelsea Homebase, Box 501, Leicester LE94 0AA.

Online at gardensillustrated.com

Closing date 24 April 2015 (Note: The prize does not include transport to and from London. Please see Terms & Conditions right). For more details about the RHS Chelsea Flower Show please visit **rhs.org.uk**

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1 The Promoter is Immediate Media Company Bristol Limited. **2** The promotion is open to UK residents (including the Channel Islands) aged 18 years or older, except the Promoter's employees or contractors and anyone connected with the promotion and their direct family members. **3** The closing date for entries is 11.59pm on 24 April 2015. **4** Only one entry will be permitted per person, regardless of method of entry. Bulk entries made by third parties will not be permitted. **5** There are three prizes; each prize is a pair of tickets to the 2015 RHS Chelsea Flower Show on 21 May 2015, and a private tour of the Homebase garden with designer Adam Frost, plus overnight accommodation for 21 May 2015 to include bed, breakfast and a two-course set dinner at The Pestana Chelsea Bridge Hotel & Spa, pestana.com. **6** All travel and any other expenses incurred at the hotel or during the visit to the RHS Chelsea Flower Show are not included in the prize. The winners will be solely responsible for such costs. **7** The winning entrants will be the first three correct entries drawn at random from all the correct entries after the closing date. The Promoter's decision as to the winners is final and no correspondence relating to the promotion will be entered into. The winners will be notified within seven days of the close of the promotion by post/telephone/email. **8** If the Promoter does not hear back from a winner within ten days of notification, the Promoter may offer the prize to a runner up. **9** There is no cash alternative and the prize will not be transferable. Prizes must be taken as stated and cannot be deferred. The Promoter reserves the right to substitute the prize with one of the same or greater value. **10** Full terms and conditions apply and can be found at gardensillustrated.com.

HOMEBASE

Reader offers

Free postage Pelargonium offer from Sarah Raven

1

2

Order your collection and get free p&p worth £4.95
"Pelargoniums are durable, beautiful and easy. They make some of the best-ever summer pot and garden plants. Kept frost-free, plants will come back year after year, looking bigger and better each time and you can propagate from them, too," says Sarah.

Take advantage of this offer from Sarah Raven on two of her carefully selected pelargonium collections, giving you free postage and packing worth £4.95*.

HOW TO ORDER

Visit sarahraven.com and quote offer code 'GIL15APR' on your shopping basket page. Or call 0845 092 0283 and quote offer code 'GIL15APR' when placing your order.

Postage & packing Free to UK destinations only.

Closing date 30 April 2015. Plants will be sent out from early April.

1 Scented Pelargonium Collection (code 190361)

These four fantastic, scented-leaved pelargoniums not only work brilliantly in a container, their foliage can also be used in long-lasting flower arrangements and their edible flowers are brilliant for decorating puddings. This exclusive collection of tender perennials contains 'Sweet Mimosa', 'Pink Capitatum', 'Attar of Roses' and 'Prince of Orange'. Average growing height 45cm.
Offer price for 4 plug plants (1 of each) **£9.95 + free p&p**;
8 plug plants (2 of each) **£16.95 + free p&p.**

2 Venetian Pelargonium Collection (code 190016)

This Venetian-flowered collection of pelargoniums includes three incredible richly coloured and velvet-textured flowers, which look sumptuous when displayed together. This exclusive collection of tender perennials contains the cultivars 'Lord Bute', 'Mystery' and the species *P. sidoides*.
Average growing height 20-40cm.
Offer price for 3 x 6cm plants **£24.95 + free p&p.**

sarah raven

TERMS AND CONDITIONS
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WIN one of FIVE Gold Passes to visit all ten Treasure Houses of England

We've teamed up with the Treasure Houses of England to offer you the chance to win a Gold Pass. The Treasure Houses of England are ten of the country's most magnificent palaces, houses and castles and a winning pass will allow you one visit to all of them for free in 2015.

The ten Treasure Houses are Beaulieu, Blenheim Palace, Burghley House, Castle Howard, Chatsworth House, Harewood, Hatfield House, Holkham Hall, Leeds Castle and Woburn Abbey.

Located in some of the most awe-inspiring settings across the country, the Treasure Houses are also a garden-lover's paradise, where you can marvel at 'Capability' Brown landscapes, explore historic walled kitchen gardens, or lose yourself within spiralling mazes. As the seasons change, there are new highlights to enjoy from roses in summer to dahlia displays come September.

For more information and opening hours visit **treasurehouses.co.uk**

HOW TO ENTER

For your chance to win one of five Treasure Houses of England Gold Passes, please answer the following question:

At which Treasure House was the custom of taking afternoon tea said to have been popularised?

A Woburn Abbey

B Beaulieu

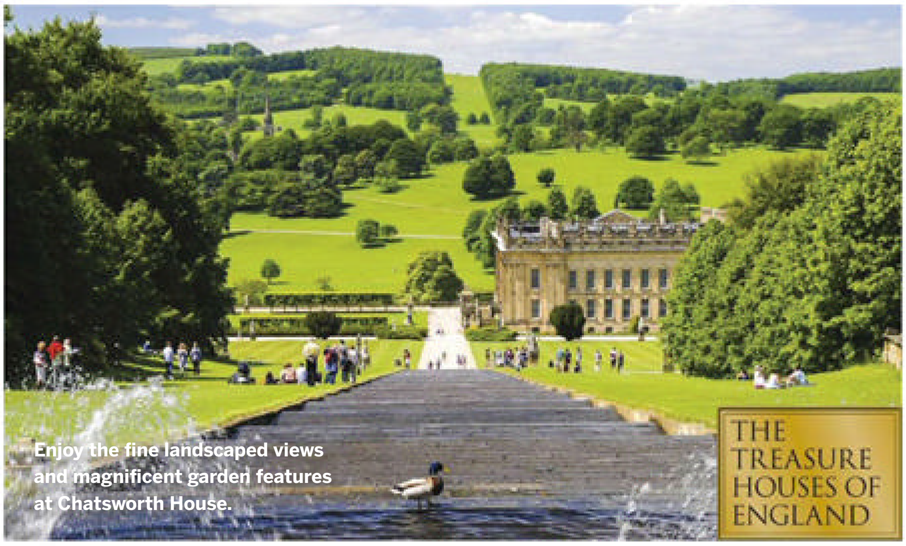
C Leeds Castle

Enter by post Send your answer on a postcard along with your name, address, telephone number and/or email to Gardens Illustrated 220/Treasure Houses, PO Box 501, Leicester LE94 0AA.

Enter online at gardensillustrated.com

Closing date 30 April 2015.

The garden at Hatfield House dates back to the 17th century when new plants were introduced from Europe.



Enjoy the fine landscaped views and magnificent garden features at Chatsworth House.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1 The Gold Pass is valid for two adults allowing one visit to all Ten Treasure Houses of England. Prize tickets must be presented on arrival. **2** The Gold Pass is valid for a standard house and garden visit only. It is not valid at special events or on bank holidays. **3** The Gold Pass will expire on 31 December 2015. **4** Travel costs are not included. **5** Prizes are not transferable and may not be used in conjunction with any other offer. **6** There are no cash alternatives. **7** Houses have varying opening hours and season. Please check the website for latest information. **8** Promoter: *Gardens Illustrated*, Immediate Media Co, Bristol. **9** Entrants must be UK residents aged 18 years or older, excluding the Promoter's employees. **10** By entering you agree to be bound by all the rules of the promotion. **11** Only one entry per person allowed. **12** No responsibility accepted for lost, delayed, ineligible or fraudulent entries. **13** Closing date for entries is midnight on 30 April 2015. **14** Winners will be notified within two weeks. **15** The draw is final and no correspondence will be entered into. **16** For details of the winner send an SAE to Immediate Media Company Bristol within two months of the closing date. If any winner is unable to be contacted within one month of the closing date, the Promoter will offer the prize to a runner up. **17** Promoter reserves the right to substitute the prize with one of the same or greater value but there is no cash alternative. **18** The promotion is subject to the laws of England. **19** Immediate Media Company Limited (publishers of *Gardens Illustrated*) would love to keep you informed by post or telephone of special offers and promotions from the Immediate Media Company Group. Please write 'Do not contact: Immediate Media Co Ltd' if you would prefer not to receive these. *Gardens Illustrated* would like to keep you informed of special offers and other promotions by newsletter, email or text message. Please write your email address and mobile number on your postcard if you would like to receive these. You may unsubscribe from these at any time. Treasure Houses of England would like to keep you informed by email, post or phone of their special offers and promotions. Please write 'Do not contact: Treasure Houses' on your entry if you would prefer not to receive these.

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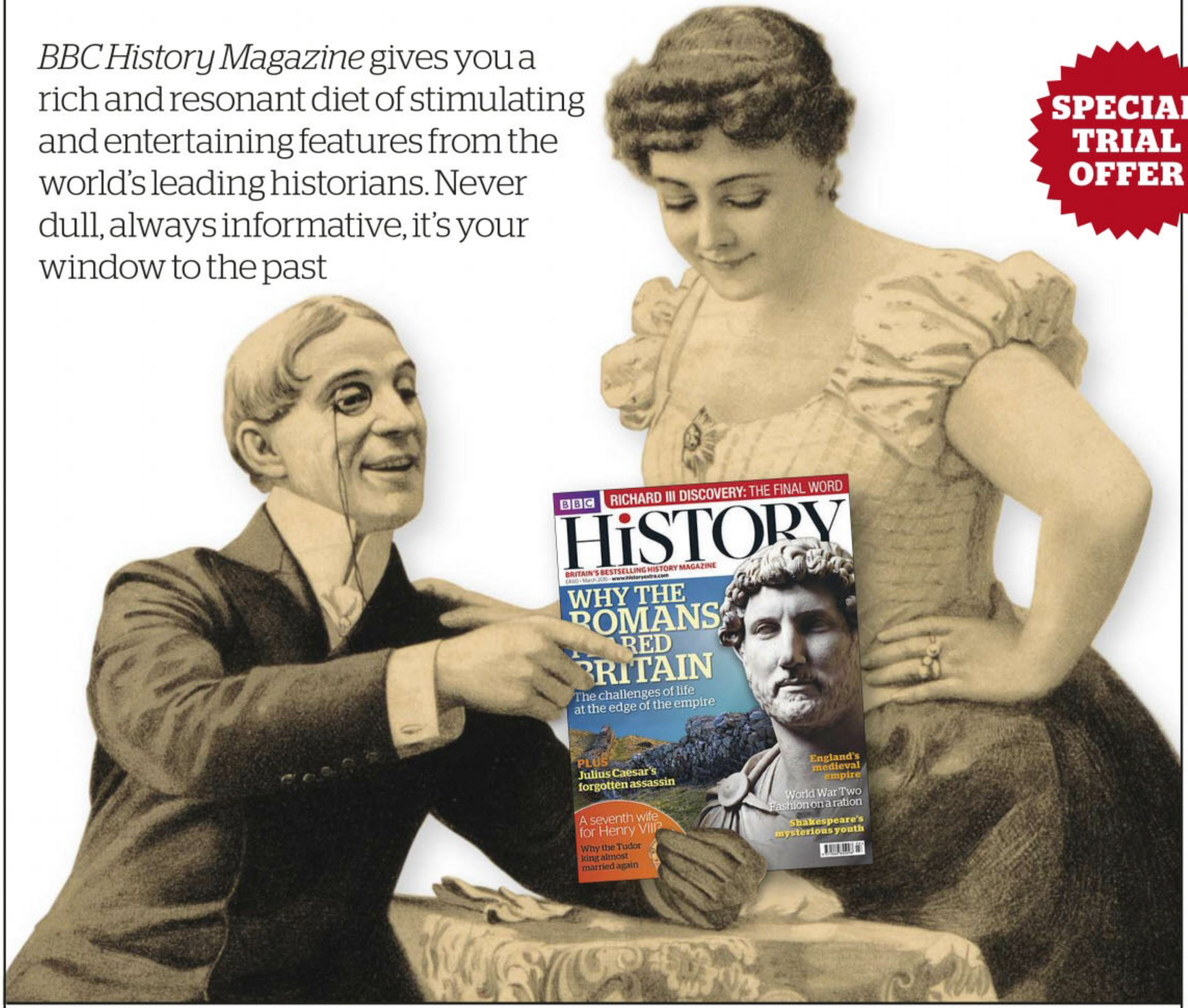

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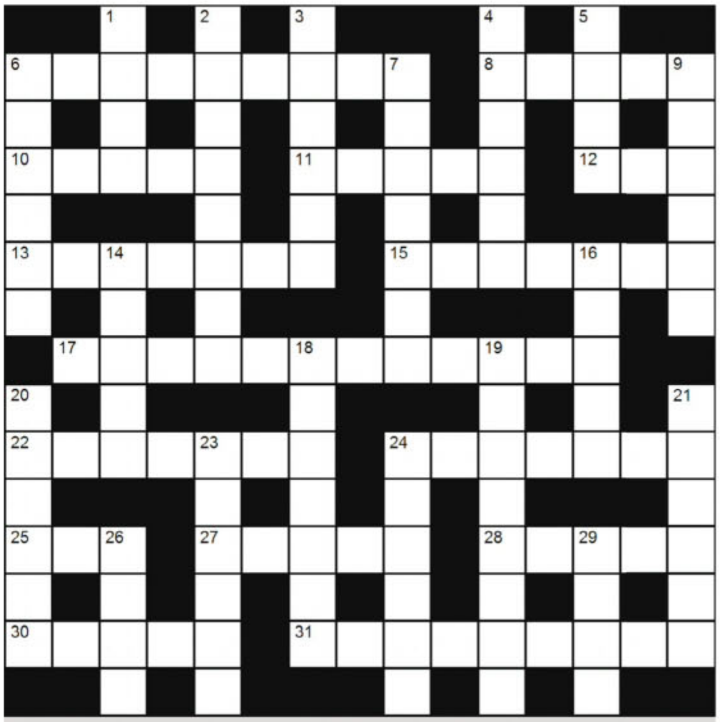

ACROSS
6 A blooming big thing to grow from seed in a season! (9)
8 Some coastal *Armeria* provides a warning (5)
10 Care to move a palm which produces betel nuts (5)
11 Okra – made from eucalyptus tree produce with unpleasant odour! (5)
12 Garden designer Pearson's first unusual DNA (3)
13 Long and slender – like *Euonymus europaeus*? (7)
15 Form of *Hedera* and a popular pub name (3,4)
17 Plant also called 'glory tree' – turns lemon curd red! (12)
22 These cucurbits spoil lines (7)
24 See 23 down.
25 Cheek of an orchid flower's labellum (3)
27 Eg skunk cabbages – some fear, um, stink! (5)
28 Flat part of a leaf (5)
30 Small shoot right inside pigs, perhaps (5)
31 Young plants – in sedges scattered round lake (9)

DOWN
1 GQT member familiarly embraced by plantsman neighbour! (4)
2 Mediterranean 'rose bay' devastating one alder (8)
3 1960s model description of unpruned shrub? (6)
4 Highest layer of tree branches (6)
5 Difficult as a crustaceous seed case? (4)
6 Thinly scattered – first of season's spoilt pears (6)
7 A tuberous turnip-like vegetable Marion twisted round top of pot (7)
9 Genus of aromatic labiate herb the man cultivated (6)
14 Time-waster breaks riddle, dropping last of seed (5)
16 Genus of broad-leaf trees devastated by disease in 1960s (5)
18 Removes rudimentary flowers to encourage bigger blooms (7)
19 Plant's underground growth and soil makes boat roll (4,4)
20 Whiffs of bouquets? (6)
21 Flat-topped flower clusters: a feature of St Columb, Elstow (6)
23/24 across Flowers of *Choisya* and of a citrus tree (6,7)
24 Ex-presidents' shrubs? (6)
26 Grape's produce right inside plant container (4)
29 Award-winning garden designer, __ Maynard (4)

SOLUTIONS TO THIS MONTH'S CROSSWORD WILL BE PRINTED NEXT MONTH

MARCH'S SOLUTIONS
ACROSS 1 Stop **4** Cep **6** Pleach **9** Floribunda **10** Rare **11** Siesta **12** Catchfly **13** May tree **15** Arabis **17** Sickle **19** Othello **23** Leaf-scar **25** Spring **26** Limb **27** Flower head **28** Spear **29** RHS **30** Deal.
DOWN 2 Tellima **3** Parasitic **4** Cabbage **5** Punica **6** Planter **7** Earth **8** Corylus **14** Eye **15** Ago **16** Bee orchid **17** Species **18** Lucifer **20** Tassels **21** Lantana **22** Arbour **24** Fibre.

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Spring gardens to visit

As spring approaches, make time to visit this collection of stunning gardens and arboretums

1 BLUEBELL ARBORETUM AND NURSERY

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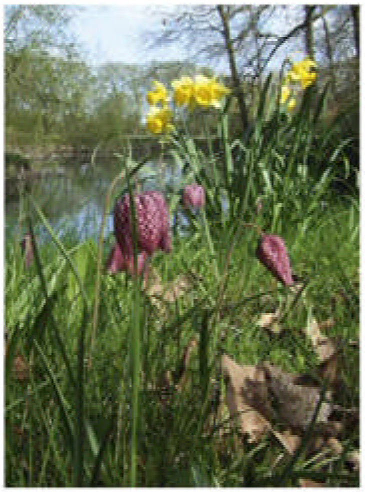
TEL **01530 413700**
WEB **bluebellnursery.com**

2 ROOKWOOD GARDEN AND GIFT FAIR

Don't miss out on this event on Thursday 23 April 2015 with specialist nurseries, gardening and gift stalls, and a cookery demonstration by award-winning local chef John Campbell, as well as spectacular tulip and spring flower displays in the garden.

ADDRESS **Rookwood House, Stockcross, Newbury, Berkshire RG20 8JX**
TEL **01488 608676** WEB **rookwoodgardenfair.co.uk**

3 WATERPERRY GARDENS



Celebrate spring at Waterperry Gardens, with the flowering of snake's head fritillary, the county flower of Oxfordshire, which will be looking its best throughout April in our wildflower meadow and riverside walk. Don't miss our Fritillary Weekend on 18-19 April. Opening times: 10am–5pm January – March, 10am–5.30pm April – October. Party bookings welcome by arrangement.

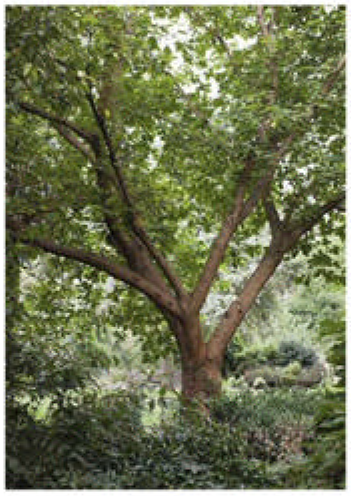
ADDRESS **Waterperry, Near Wheatley, Oxfordshire OX33 1JZ**
TEL **01844 339254**
WEB **waterperrygardens.co.uk**

4 ABBOTSBURY SUBTROPICAL GARDENS

A recent winner of the HHA/Christie's Garden of the Year Award, and described by Alan Titchmarsh as "One of the finest gardens I have ever visited." Abbotsbury is celebrating its 250th anniversary during 2015, with new features including a Burma Rope Bridge, lots of special events and more fabulous plants. 2015 is definitely the year to visit Abbotsbury.

ADDRESS **Bullers Way, Abbotsbury (nr Weymouth), Dorset DT3 4LA**
TEL **01305 871387**
WEB **abbotsburygardens.co.uk**

5 CHELSEA PHYSIC GARDEN



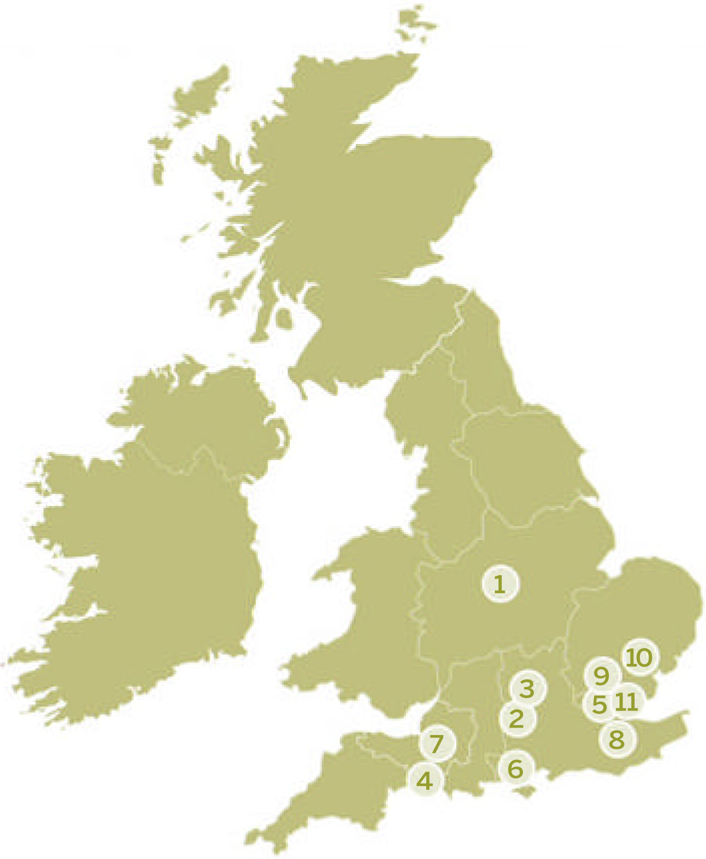
Visit Chelsea Physic Garden this spring to see the new World Woodland Garden. The Garden celebrates forest environments from around the world and the medicinal and useful plants that they produce. It is divided into three geographic regions, Americas, Europe and East Asia, and each region demonstrates the traditional and modern uses of various forest species including trees, shrubs, perennials, annuals and bulbs.

ADDRESS **66 Royal Hospital Road, London SW3 4HS**
TEL **020 7352 5646**
WEB **chelseaphysicgarden.co.uk**

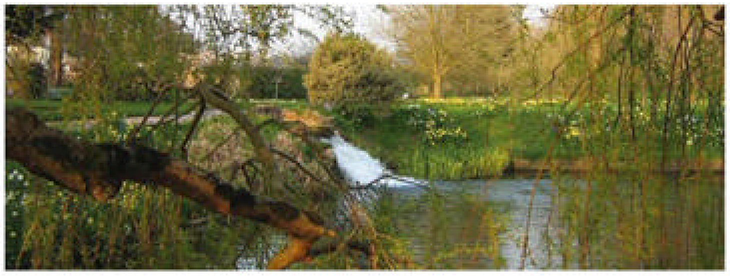
6 EXBURY GARDENS & STEAM RAILWAY

A 200-acre woodland garden, world-famous for spectacular spring colour from the Rothschild Collection of rhododendrons and azaleas. Delicate primroses and nodding daffodils bloom beneath camellias, magnolias, rare trees and shrubs. The enchanting river walks, tranquil ponds, Rock, Heather and Bog Gardens ensure year-round horticultural interest, while the 1¼ mile steam railway is a great favourite with visitors of all ages.

ADDRESS **Exbury, Southampton, Hampshire SO45 1AZ**
TEL **023 8089 1203**
WEB **exbury.co.uk**



7 THE BISHOP'S PALACE AND GARDENS



Over 14 acres of spectacular gardens including picturesque, romantic, formal, gardenesque and Victorian styles, a wild flower arboretum, specimen trees, a contemporary Garden of Reflection and a Community Garden, alongside waterfalls, well pools, a moat with resident swans and a stunning medieval Palace. Open daily 10am–4pm.

ADDRESS **Off Market Place, Wells, Somerset BA5 2PD**
TEL **01749 988111** WEB **bishopspalace.org.uk**

8 HEVER CASTLE & GARDENS

Spring is a wonderful time to view the gardens as spectacular carpets of snowdrops, crocus and daffodils welcome visitors. Walls are covered in camellias and tulips are in full bloom, as are the rhododendrons, azaleas and wisteria. Spring bedding includes hyacinths, wallflowers and pansies.

ADDRESS **Hever, Edenbridge,**
Kent TN8 7NG
TEL **01732 865224**
WEB **hevercastle.co.uk**

9 MYDDELTON HOUSE GARDENS

Marvel at the spectacular selection of spring bulbs on display at Myddelton House Gardens. Discover the world of EA Bowles, one of Britain's most famous self-taught gardeners. Explore the charming grounds, then relax in the Bowles Tea Room. Garden entry is free. For more information see the website.

ADDRESS **Bulls Cross, Enfield,**
Middlesex EN2 9HG
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WEB **visitleevalley.org.uk/gardens**

10 MARKS HALL GARDENS AND ARBORETUM

The Walled Garden nestled in the heart of the Arboretum at Marks Hall, is unusual as one of the boundaries is provided by the upper lake, with plentiful views and reflections. There is a spectacular double border along one side of the two-acre site. Starting with an earth sculpture you progress through five interconnected gardens. There are hidden pathways, unexpected vistas and curved walls, something for everyone to explore.

ADDRESS **Coggeshall, Essex CO6 1TG**
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WEB **markshall.org.uk**

11 OSTERLEY PARK AND HOUSE

April sees a cheerful display of bulbs throughout the flower gardens at Osterley, from rare 18th-century tulips to bright pockets of daffodils, crocus and primroses. And you may catch the early flowering, rare Banksian rose in the Tudor Walled Garden. Open daily, 10am–5pm.

ADDRESS **Jersey Road,**
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6 PLANT SUPPORTS UK

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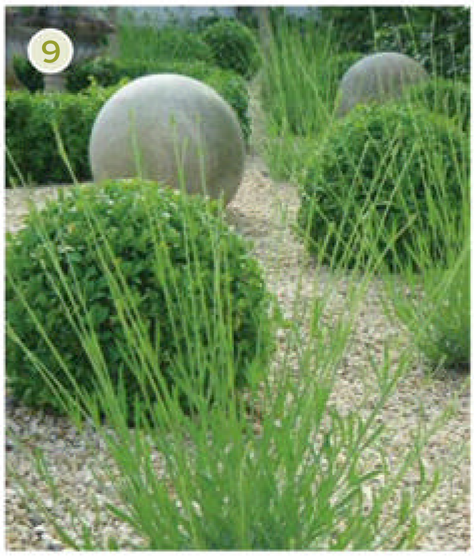

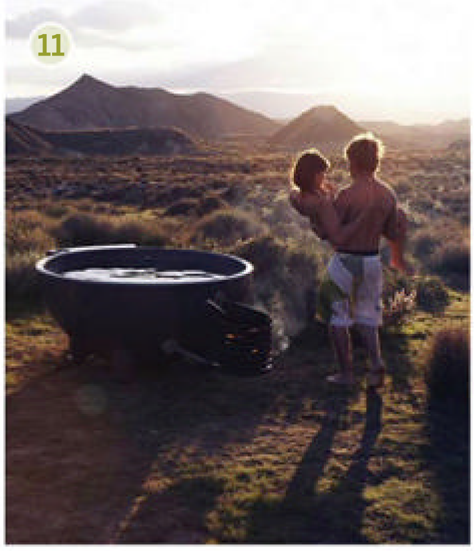

7 ARTISAN PLANT SUPPORTS

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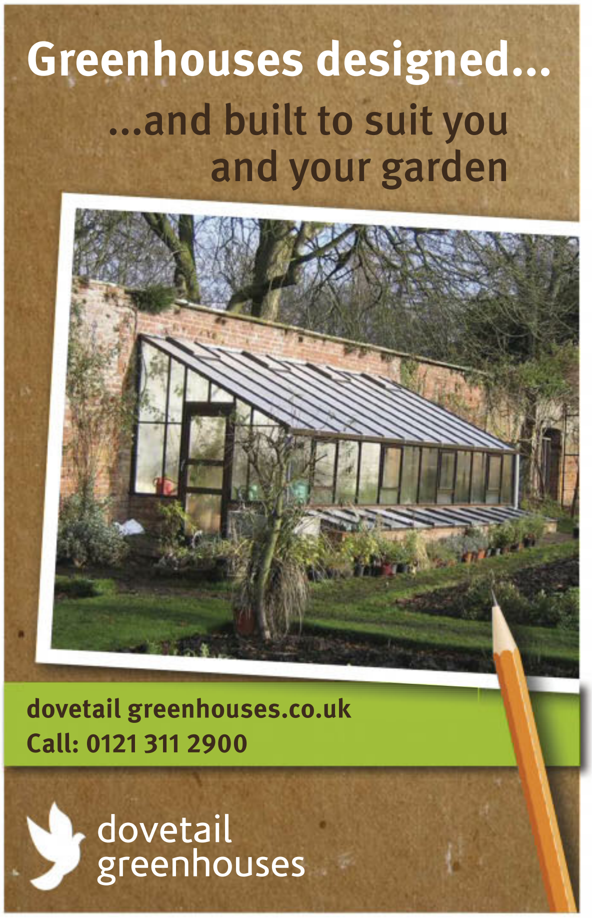

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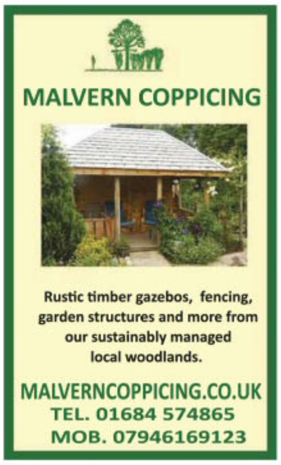

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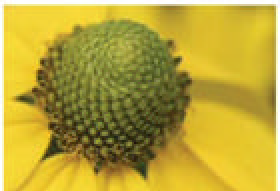

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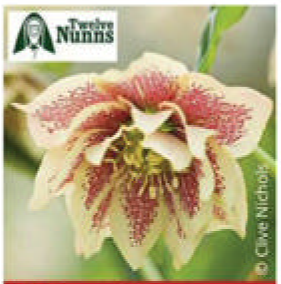

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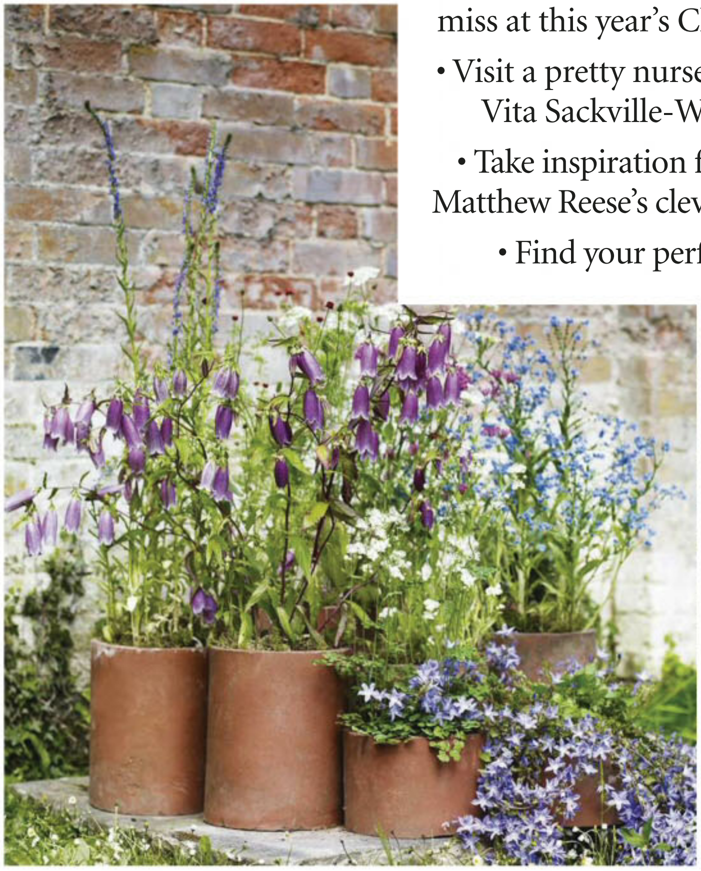
- Discover the gardens you won't want to miss at this year's Chelsea Flower Show
- Visit a pretty nursery in Germany and Vita Sackville-West's first garden
- Take inspiration from the second of Matthew Reese's clever container designs
- Find your perfect *Heucherella*



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ANDRE REUTER; DIANNA JAZWINSKI; CLAIRE TAKACS; ANDREW MONTGOMERY

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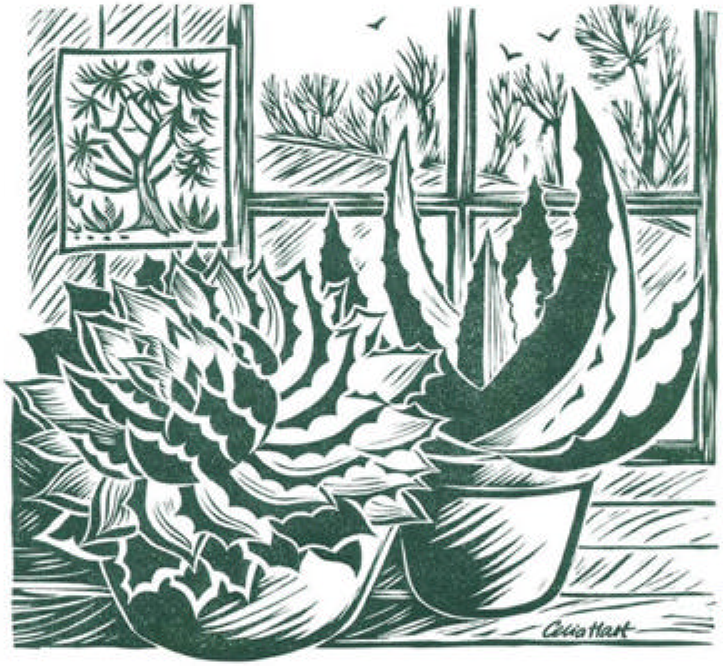
Aloe sunshine

As he begins work on his new Californian garden, Frank rediscovers an old passion

WORDS **FRANK RONAN** ILLUSTRATION **CELIA HART**



I had fantasies about creating hardier strains for the possibilities of the names – Aloe 'Sailor', Aloe 'Darling' and endlessly on

The first time I saw the great tree aloe, *Aloe barberae*, as it should be, fully grown, out of doors and in quantity, I remember being rooted to the spot with my mouth open. It was 1999, and I already had a bit of a penchant for the genus. Despite being constrained by a miniature roof garden at London Bridge there was a potted selection of the readily available: *brevifolia, striata, maculata, striatula*, but nothing to prepare me for curling rosettes thirty feet up against a Californian sky.

The spot that rooted me was in the Desert Garden of The Huntington Library in Los Angeles. The sky that day, from what I remember, was rather grey and rainy. In that instant a keen interest became an obsession. I flew home with an *Aloe polyphylla* in my hand luggage, among other succulent booty, thrilled by the nurseryman's bemoaning that it was a species that was never happy in California, being from a much cooler and wetter climate in the mountains of Lesotho. It felt like a rescue.

The obsession continued for a few years. Anyone who mentioned that they might be going to South Africa was given a shopping list, which once resulted in the long-coveted *A. reitzii*, though I never managed to get it to flower. I joined the British Cactus & Succulent Society, mainly to get access to their seed lists, and found and exploited the estimable Huntington plant distribution scheme.

By then I had a proper garden and a greenhouse and fantasies about hybridising and creating hardier strains (one of the motivations for which, I should admit, was the possibilities of the names – *Aloe* 'Sailor', *Aloe* 'Darling' and endlessly on). I never, however, got hold of an *Aloe barberae*, and, even if I had, keeping it happy would have been a hard trick to pull off in Worcestershire.

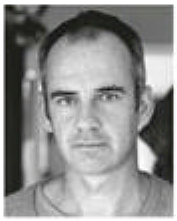
Then the run of mild winters ended, and they ended the year I finally decided that bubble wrapping the greenhouse was a waste of time. The aloes, of course, being more delightfully fleshy than any other thing, were among the first to turn to mush and blackness and stench. I turned my back on the greenhouse and on aloe delusions and what had once been the beloved became a painful symbol of my own stupidity. I decided to live my winters from then on enjoying the frosts and the colder they came the better, for they could never touch me or harm my newly hardened garden again.

So it might have remained, had I not found myself with an acre of southern California to fill, which was never to be expected. There are no aloes in this garden but there are plenty about, and the winter brings most of them bursting into flower, stirring something in me back to life. We were told of a nursery at the bottom of our hill that sold some nice succulents, and went, not expecting much, to see what was there.

The nursery was astonishing: overgrown and neglected and packed with treasures; head-high pachypodiums in infinite variety and quantity; giant agaves long burst from their pots and spilling pups from under their skirts; rows of ten foot cactus pillars like the ruins of temples. And tree aloes. The owner was elderly, so he was still calling them *Aloe bainesii*, but there were three *barberae* screaming at me from among the crowd, two of which stood on six foot trunks.

Bracing myself for an elaborate justification for blowing a lot of money, I asked how much? The prices, it seemed, like the names, had not been changed in twenty years. I took all three, and enough other things to make a truckload, and went back to fill the truck again the next day.

Having spent some time wondering how this garden will work, driving home with a truck full of succulents has changed things radically. Seeing them standing in front of the house makes the garden feel different already. It was a very good beginning. □



Frank Ronan is a novelist who gardens in both the UK and USA.

READER EVENT

Frank is speaking at the *Gardens Illustrated* Festival. To find out more, see page 9 or visit **gardensfestival.com**

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